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Nick Carter Stories

THE MASK OF DEATH

or Nick Carter's Curious Case

NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE MASK OF DEATH;

Or, NICK CARTER'S CURIOUS CASE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS ROBBERY.

"Nick Carter will solve the mystery. No crime is too deep for him. He'll ferret out the truth and run down the rascals. He will recover your lost treasures, too, Mr. Strickland, one and all of them, take my word for it. If there is one man on earth who can accomplish it, Nick Carter is that one man. So pull yourself together, sir, and face this calamity man fashion. Carter already is on his way here, and he soon will fathom this outrageous and——"

Nick Carter did not wait to hear more. He pushed open the door through which he had heard the above remarks, observing that it was ajar, and he entered without ceremony the apartments of the man to whom they had been addressed.

They denoted that he was on the threshold of an extraordinary case, one shrouded in mystery and involving a great loss, and the scene within seemed to warrant all that he had overheard.

The entrance hall through which he had passed led into a beautifully furnished parlor overlooking Fifth Avenue. It was one of the front rooms of an apartment occupying the entire second floor of the spacious and magnificent old Vanhausen mansion, turned to other than strictly private residential uses since the encroachment of commercial interests upon that part of the fashionable New York thoroughfare.

A slender, strikingly pretty girl of eighteen sat weeping in one of the richly upholstered armchairs. Her fair face was of an artless, winsome type, evincing girlish innocence and that sweet and sensitive nature which none can resist. A light complexion and glistening golden hair, crowning a shapely and perfectly poised head, told plainly that she was of German extraction.

One of her two companions was a man turned sixty. He was pacing to and fro in a state of abject distress and violent agitation. His short, corpulent figure was shaking as if his every nerve had become a writhing, red-hot wire in his palpitating flesh. His round, florid face was streaming with perspiration. His hair, a tawny mop on a large, intellectual head, was in indescribable disorder. He was wringing his hands and moaning as if his heart was broken.

The only other person present when Nick entered with his chief assistant, Chick Carter, was a tall, clean-cut man in the twenties, one Arthur Gordon, a successful broker and popular society man with whom Nick was well acquainted, and to whose urgent telephone request he then was responding.

"Ah, here is Mr. Carter now," he exclaimed, when the two detectives entered. "Thank goodness, Nick, you could come immediately. We're up against it good and hard, a terrible robbery."

"H'm, is that so?"

"You know Mr. Rudolph Strickland by name and reputation, I'm sure. This is his niece, Wilhelmina Strickland, from Boston. Now, do, Mr. Strickland, compose yourself, that Mr. Carter may lose no time in sifting this matter to the bottom."

There was, indeed, as Gordon had implied, little need of an introduction to Mr. Rudolph Strickland. His name was a familiar one in the best circles of New York society. He numbered among his friends and acquaintances nearly all of the distinguished artists, musicians, and literary people of any note, who were frequent visitors to his spacious apartments to admire his superb collection of art treasures, or hear his master hand manipulate his famous Stradivarius violin.

He was in no sense a society man, nevertheless, being a somewhat reserved and eccentric German, with a passion for music, literature, and art, treasures of which

he had collected from all parts of Europe, where he was a recognized connoisseur, critic, and man of letters.

Age had begun to undermine his health, however, and for nearly five years he had occupied his present quarters on the second floor of the old Vanhausen mansion, richly furnished and containing most of the fine collection upon which he had expended a considerable part of his fortune. He was a bachelor and lived entirely alone, save when encroached upon by the woman who cared for his apartments, or by his artistic and literary friends.

A glance around the parlor, while he responded to Arthur Gordon's introduction and afterward presented Chick, gave Nick a hint at the character of the robbery. Several empty picture frames, from each of which the canvas had been removed, were lying on the floor and leaning against the walls; while vacant places on the mantel and in or on the several costly glass cabinets told the tale of depredation.

"Gordon is right," said he, as to the young man's advice. "You must be calm, Mr. Strickland, or valuable time may be lost."

"Lost! What is loss of time compared with the loss I have suffered?" cried the old German, wringing his hands and desperately running his fingers through his thick growth of hair. "I am heartbroken. I am in despair. My beloved Murillo. My Titian. My Meissonier and Corot. My priceless Correggio, and two originals by Helleu. My antique, engraved gems. My costly collection of jade. My——"

"Hush! You will make yourself ill, Uncle Rudolph!" cried Wilhelmina, rising and clasping his arm with her dainty hands. "Do please try——"

"Ah, I am ill already. It is a loss to make angels weep," Mr. Strickland went on, in pathetic agitation. "It is gone—that, too, is gone! My life, my soul, my best treasure on earth! My precious Stradivarius! Oh, Mr. Carter——"

Nick checked him by placing both hands on the old man's shoulders, holding him firmly while he confronted him and said, with intense and impressive earnestness:

"Stop, sir, and listen to me. You have met with a great loss, but grief and lamentation will not bring back your stolen treasures. That now is what you most wish. That can be accomplished only by calm consideration of the circumstances, followed by speedy and energetic efforts to trace the crooks and recover their plunder. I feel sure that I can do both, but I will undertake it only on one condition, that you sit down and compose yourself while I look into the matter. Courage, Mr. Strickland! Your treasures are not hopelessly lost. They have not been destroyed by fire. They still exist—and I shall find them and restore them to you."

Nick spoke with more assurance than he really felt, but the circumstances seemed to warrant his confident prediction, and it was not without effect, combined with his strong, personal influence.

Mr. Strickland pulled himself together, clasping both hands of the detective and saying fervently, but much more calmly:

"God bless you! God bless you for that encouragement. I will try to be composed. I really will try, Mr. Carter."

"Capital!" Nick said approvingly, urging him to a chair. "I now think I shall accomplish something. Tell me, Arthur, what you know of this matter. Never mind at present what has been stolen. State merely the circumstances."

"That may be quickly done, Nick," Gordon replied. "Miss Strickland, who resides in Boston and to whom I am engaged, is visiting my parents for a few days. We called here at five o'clock this afternoon, and her uncle consented to go with us to dinner. We left here about six o'clock and returned just before nine. During that brief interval these rooms were entered and robbed of treasures enough to fill a wagon, and the value of which can hardly be estimated. How the job was done is a mystery. There is not the slightest evidence showing where the thieves entered, or how they removed the property. It could not have been carried out through——"

"One moment," Nick interposed. "Does Mr. Strickland occupy this entire floor?"

"He does."

"Are you sure the door was closed and locked when you went out?"

"Yes, absolutely."

"Who occupies the floor below?"

"Madame Denise, a fashionable milliner. Her rooms were open when we returned. Several girls were busy in the workroom. Madame Denise was in her display room in the front of the house. The door has a large plate-glass panel and is within a few feet of the street door."

"You have questioned her, I infer?" Nick put in.

"Yes, certainly. I went down and questioned her after telephoning to you. She had only a few customers this evening, but was in the front room all the while. She is positive that no persons have visited these rooms, or left them, by means of the stairs and the street door. Such a quantity of plunder could not possibly have been taken out that way without her observing it."

"Is there a rear door from the house?" Nick inquired.

"Yes," Gordon quickly nodded. "It leads to a small paved area between the back of this and the adjoining dwelling and the side wall of the Carroll Building. I have learned positively, however, that no persons have been in or out of the rear door."

"From whom?"

"From the janitor. He is thoroughly trustworthy. He lives in a rear room on the ground floor. He has been there all of the evening, and the door of his room has not been closed. No person could have passed through the hall without his having seen or heard him. He is absolutely sure there have been no intruders."

"By Jove, it does appear a bit mysterious," Chick remarked.

"Plainly enough the plunder must have been taken out in some direction," Nick replied. "Who occupies the upper floor of the house?"

"Victor Gilbert, the well-known photographer. He is the only tenant on that floor. His integrity is beyond question."

"Very true," Nick allowed. "I know him personally."

"His rooms were closed at six o'clock and have not since been occupied, so far as I can learn," Gordon went on. "I have telephoned to him, telling him of the robbery, and he now is on his way here, that we may visit his rooms. It does not seem possible, however, that the robbery can have been committed from above."

"Nor from below, Arthur, if all you have stated is correct," Nick said, a bit dryly. "Is it possible to reach the back windows of this apartment from those of the Carroll Building?"

"No, no; it is quite impossible," Gordon protested. "The distance is more than twenty feet. Besides, Nick, there is no evidence that the windows of this flat have been opened. All of them were securely locked and——"

"I will inspect them presently," Nick interrupted. "It is very evident, at least, that robbers have been here, and I know their knavery was not accomplished by any supernatural means. Who knew of Mr. Strickland's intention to dine with you and be absent from his apartments this evening?"

"Nobody knew it, Mr. Carter," Miss Strickland cried, with girlish earnestness. "We did not know it ourselves until after we came here. We then persuaded Uncle Rudolph to go with us."

"Were any other persons present?"

"No, sir, only we three. No one could have overheard us."

"Mina is right," put in Gordon. "No person could have known that Mr. Strickland would be absent this evening. It was entirely unpremeditated. The crime could not have been planned from any knowledge of our intention."

"Do you keep any servants, Mr. Strickland?" Nick inquired, turning to him.

He had overcome his agitation, his terrible distress immediately following his discovery of the crime, made hardly an hour before. He appeared to derive much hope and encouragement from what Nick had said to him, and from the fact that an investigation by the famous detective already was in progress.

Arthur Gordon had, in fact, telephoned immediately to Nick for assistance after making the superficial investigation mentioned, and finding the robbery so shrouded in mystery as, he felt sure, to completely baffle the ordinary police. It was about ten o'clock when the two detectives arrived upon the scene.

"No, I keep no servants," said Mr. Strickland, replying to Nick's question. "As you may infer, Mr. Carter, I have always been very careful to protect my treasures. My lost Stradivarius alone is worth forty thousand dollars. I would not have parted with it for ten times that sum. The door of my apartments is a very strong one, and it is provided with two heavy locks, which act automatically. My windows have patent fastenings, and they are always closed and securely locked when I am absent. This evening was no exception."

"But who takes care of your rooms?" Nick inquired. "Do you look after them yourself?"

"Oh, no, not the care and cleaning of them," said Mr. Strickland. "I employ a woman from the adjoining house, that occupied by Mr. Gerald Vaughn and his sister, both of whom are friends of mine. I pay their housekeeper, Mrs. Amelia West, to come in each day to make my bed and put my sleeping room in order, and to come once a week to sweep and dust all of my rooms."

"I see," Nick remarked, with a nod.

"She has been doing so for nearly three months," Mr. Strickland added. "Alas! I now must find another. I am more than sorry to lose her."

"What is the trouble?" Nick questioned. "Has she been discharged by Mr. Vaughn?"

"Oh, no!" Mr. Strickland shook his head sadly. "Mrs. West died quite suddenly yesterday morning."

CHAPTER II.

A VAIN SEARCH.

Nick Carter ended his interrogations quite abruptly.

"I will look around for myself in search of evidence," he remarked, turning to Arthur Gordon. "You had better remain here with Mr. Strickland and his niece. If I require anything, or wish to add to my inquiries, I will call you. I shall return in a few minutes."

"Go ahead," Gordon nodded. "The case is in your hands."

Nick Carter glanced at Chick and led the way into an adjoining front room.

It was a handsomely furnished music room. An expensive piano occupied one corner. Racks of music, a viola, with many articles of like significance, evinced the refinement and musical genius of the owner. Mr. Rudolph Strickland had, in fact, an international reputation as a violinist.

"Well, chief, the rascals have left the piano, at least," Chick dryly observed, noting also in this room convincing evidence of the visit of the thieves.

"Yes, so I see," Nick replied, more seriously.

"What do you make of it?"

"A remarkable job has been done here, if all that Gordon stated is correct. I think, Chick, you had better set about confirming it, while I look farther."

"You mean?"

"Go down and talk with Madame Denise and the janitor. You can measure them better than Gordon. Have a look at the area back of the house and see what possibilities it presents for getting away with such a quantity of plunder. Find out whether a wagon, or a conveyance of any kind, has been standing in the avenue, the side street on which the Carroll Building fronts, or in any locality available for such a job."

"I understand," Chick nodded.

"Step to the door of the next house, also, and question Mr. Vaughn and his sister. It's barely possible that one of them may have seen or heard the thieves, without having suspected what was going on in here. Find out, at all events, then rejoin me."

Chick hastened to follow these instructions. A brief talk with Madame Denise and the janitor, one James Donald, convinced him that both were honest and could add nothing to what they already had stated.

An inspection of the area mentioned was equally convincing. It was only a narrow, paved space back of the Vanhausen dwelling and that adjoining it, which occupied a corner lot on the side street on which the Carroll Building faced.

There was no exit to the street, and Chick saw plainly that crooks not only could not have removed their booty from the rear door of the building, but also that they would have found it impossible to ascend to the back windows of Mr. Strickland's apartments, which were more than twenty feet from the ground. A long ladder would have been necessary, and their movements in the quietude of the inclosed area would surely have been heard by the janitor.

"Nothing was done out here," thought Chick, turning to retrace his steps to the front of the house. "That's dead open and shut. The stuff must have been taken out of the front door, despite the assertion of Madame Denise to the contrary."

Investigation outside, nevertheless, seemed to confirm the statement of the milliner. Chick could not learn that any suspicious conveyance had been seen in the neighborhood. Both the avenue and side street were brightly lighted. Pedestrians were constantly passing. It seemed impossible that crooks could have committed such a crime without being detected. There would not have been greater risk in attempting it in broad daylight.

More deeply puzzled, now, as to how it could by any means have been accomplished, Chick went to question the occupants of the corner house. It was an attractive brownstone dwelling of three stories, its side wall adjoining that of the Vanhausen residence, with no passageway between them. A light in the front hall denoted that the Vaughns had not retired.

A large wreath tied with purple ribbon hung on the knob of the door, a token that the shadow of death had fallen upon the house. But this did not deter Chick from ringing the bell, in accord with Nick's instructions.

It was answered almost immediately by a slender, serious-looking man about thirty, clad in a black suit. He was of dark complexion, with wavy black hair and a peculiarly clear and pallid skin, accentuated somewhat by a flowing black mustache. He gazed inquiringly at Chick, who bowed politely and said:

"I wish to see Mr. Vaughn. Is he at home?"

"I am Mr. Vaughn. What can I do for you?"

The reply was agreeably made, but with a gravity Chick was quick to observe and attributed to the death of one of the household.

"I am sorry to trouble you at such a time," he rejoined. "My name is Carter. I am a detective. The apartments of your neighbor, Mr. Strickland, have been robbed this evening, and I——"

"Robbed!" Mr. Vaughn exclaimed, interrupting with a quick display of surprise and consternation. "Dear me, is it possible? Robbed of what, Mr. Carter?"

"Of several very valuable paintings, many of his art treasures, and his almost priceless Stradivarius, together with——"

"Oh, oh, that is dreadful!" Mr. Vaughn again interposed. "Strickland is such a fine old gentleman. I am sorry for him, more than sorry for him. Come in, Mr. Carter. Can I be of any assistance?"

Chick accepted the invitation and stepped into the hall. Through the open door of an adjoining parlor, dimly lighted by the rays from the hall lamp, he could see a closed casket on a bier, also numerous boxes of flowers, evidently prepared for removal the following day.

Observing his furtive glance in that direction, Mr. Vaughn said gravely, while he considerately closed the door of the room:

"My aunt, who long has been the housekeeper for my sister and myself, died suddenly of heart failure yesterday morning. She is to be taken to Springfield to-morrow for burial. Step into the library, Mr. Carter. Clarissa will be terribly shocked by Mr. Strickland's misfortune. She is really fond of the old gentleman, and often runs in to see him and hear him play on his rare old Strad. Stolen—that is too bad! It will be a terrible loss to him."

"I agree with you," Chick replied. "He appears heartbroken."

"No wonder. This is my sister, Miss Vaughn, Mr. Carter."

Chick had entered an attractively furnished library, where a handsome, dark girl, in the twenties, sat reading a book. She laid it aside at once and arose to acknowledge the introduction, though with manifest wonderment as to the visitor's mission.

Gerald Vaughn hastened to inform her, however, evoking repeated expressions of surprise and sympathy, and Chick then said:

"I came here only to ask whether you have heard any disturbance outside this evening. We wish to find out, if possible, how the thieves entered Mr. Strickland's apartments and got away with such a quantity of plunder without being seen or heard. It really is very mysterious."

"Decidedly so, Mr. Carter," Vaughn agreed. "But we have heard nothing unusual, not a sound suggestive of anything wrong."

"We have been here alone, too, since dinner," put in Clarissa, gazing with demure, dark eyes at the face of the detective. "Both of us have been reading, and it has seemed unusually quiet. If there had been any noise outside, Gerald, dear, we surely ought to have heard it."

"It seems so, indeed, Clarissa."

"I have not heard a sound that I can recall."

"Nor have I, Mr. Carter, I assure you."

"The circumstances are such, too, that I am unusually sensitive," Miss Vaughn added. "The sudden death of my Aunt Amelia has made me very nervous. I think we should send a message of sympathy, Gerald, to Mr. Strickland. He was very kind to us yesterday, when he heard of our bereavement."

"I think so, too," Vaughn said quickly. "I had better step over there, perhaps, and see him personally."

"That will be even better, Gerald."

"Is there any objection, Mr. Carter, to my doing so?"

"Not the slightest," said Chick. "You may go with me, if you wish, since there is no information you can give me."

"None whatever, Mr. Carter, I regret to say," Vaughn replied. "I hope you will command me, however, if I can be of any assistance. You don't mind being alone here, Clarissa, for a few minutes?"

"No, indeed. I will sit here till you return."

"I have closed the parlor door."

"Very well. Good evening, Mr. Carter. I do hope you will recover Mr. Strickland's property. Tell him, Gerald, how deeply grieved I am over his misfortune."

"I will, Clarissa. Now, Mr. Carter, I am ready to go with you."

Chick saw nothing to be gained by further inquiries. He accepted the slender, shapely hand of the young woman, tendered while she was speaking, noting that there were tears in the sad and somber eyes with which she regarded him, forcing a faint, momentary smile to her finely curved lips.

Gerald Vaughn, too, was equally impressive. There was something about both that lifted them above the ordinary, those indefinable qualities which denote class and char-

acter, and which alone serve to avert distrust and suspicion.

Chick bowed and said a word of apology for having intruded, then accompanied Gerald Vaughn from the house.

Nick Carter was in the meantime proceeding with the investigations in the Strickland apartment, but only with negative results.

Adjoining the two front rooms was a third, partly furnished for a dining room and connecting with a spacious library. Back of these were two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a small kitchen, evidently but little used. A window in the kitchen and in one of the bedrooms, also a small ground-glass window in the bathroom, overlooked the area back of the house.

Nick found that the first two were closed and securely locked, but that in the bathroom was open a few inches for ventilation. It was only about two feet square, and Nick looked in vain for any evidence denoting that a person had entered through it.

Gazing out, he could see the gloomy area below, also the dark wall of the Carroll Building some twenty feet away, much too far for access to have been gained from any of its windows, all of which were those of business offices of one kind or another.

Looking up, all that could be seen were the gloomy walls of the several buildings and a portion of the star-studded sky.

"By Jove, the rascals have cleverly covered their tracks," Nick muttered a bit grimly after these futile observations. "It was the work of no ordinary crooks. I should need daylight, I reckon, in order to pick up a thread worth following."

He was laboring at some disadvantage by means of the incandescent lamps only, and he returned in a few minutes to the front parlor.

"Are those back windows as you found them, Arthur, when you returned with Mr. Strickland?" he inquired, when Gordon started up to meet him.

"Yes, precisely," he replied. "What have you learned?"

"Very little thus far," said Nick. "I see that the bathroom window is open a few inches, Mr. Strickland. Are you in the habit of leaving it open?"

"Yes, Mr. Carter, I am," was the reply. "But the bathroom door is always locked. The window, moreover, is hardly large enough to admit a man, nor could it be easily reached from the outside. I don't see how the thieves could possibly have entered it."

"Crooks devise means which no honest man would think of," Nick replied. "It is my opinion that——"

He did not finish the remark, for Chick returned at that moment in company with Gerald Vaughn, and introductions and a brief discussion of the crime immediately followed. It was soon interrupted by the arrival of the photographer, however, who occupied the entire upper floor of the remodeled house.

"We will go up at once, Mr. Gilbert," said Nick, after their greeting. "Come with us, Chick. Gordon will wait here with Mr. Vaughn."

The photographer hastened to lead the way through the hall and up the stairs, switching on the light in his reception room, his studio, and in the extensive rear room containing the cameras and other paraphernalia required in his business.

"There appears to be nothing wrong," he remarked, as the detectives followed him to the rear room. "Everything is just as I left it at six o'clock, Mr. Carter, as far as I can see."

"I will look a little farther, Gilbert, with your permission," Nick replied.

"Certainly. Go as far as you like."

Nick then began a careful inspection of the three back windows, all of which were found to be securely locked. None bore any evidence of having been recently opened. The floor near them bore no trace of earth, or dirt, denoting the recent presence of intruders.

So far as could be seen, in fact, even by the keen-eyed detective, everything in the rooms of Mr. Victor Gilbert was, as he had stated, precisely as he had left it.

"Is there a way to the roof?" Nick inquired, glancing up at a slightly sloping, twelve-foot skylight nearly in the middle of the ceiling.

"Yes. There is a ladder and a scuttle in my dark room," said the photographer.

"Let's go up there," Nick said shortly. "I see that the roof is a flat one, or nearly so, and I wish to cover all of the ground."

Mr. Gilbert again led the way.

One after another they mounted the ladder and crawled through the narrow scuttle. A stretch of slightly sloping, tar-and-pebble roof, the huge skylight aglow with light from below, the two chimneys with which the house was provided, the lower roof of that adjoining it, the gloomy side wall of the lofty Carroll Building, the black intervening abyss, the glare from the brightly lighted streets in other directions—only these and the purple dome of the starry sky met their searching gaze.

A fierce gust of wind caused the photographer to retreat toward the scuttle.

"By gracious, Carter, I'd rather venture up here by daylight, and in calm weather," he shouted. "Go as far as you like, you two, but I am ducking back on the ladder."

"I guess, Gilbert, daylight will be necessary for a further investigation," Nick replied.

"That's right, too," Chick agreed. "It don't seem possible that the job could have been done from here. The rascals would have been blown away with their plunder."

"It is much more windy than early in the evening," Nick rejoined. "We'll wait till morning to seek further."

"That's good judgment, Nick, in my opinion."

"Go ahead. I'll follow you."

Both crawled through the scuttle and picked their way down the steep ladder, and five minutes later found them again in the Strickland apartment.

The elderly German still was moaning over the loss of his costly treasures. He looked up with anxious eyes when the detectives entered, saying quickly:

"Don't keep me in suspense. What have you learned, Mr. Carter?"

Nick smiled faintly and shook his head.

"You must not expect too much of us, Mr. Strickland," he replied kindly. "Such problems as this are not solved in a moment. Most of our discoveries thus far are of a negative character."

"The police——"

"Could not possibly accomplish more than we," Nick interrupted. "Immediate publicity, too, might result in a disadvantage. You must leave the case entirely to me and wait patiently until morning. We will return at an early hour to continue our work."

"I shall remain here with uncle to-night, Arthur," said Wilhelmina, turning to her lover.

"That will be wise, Mina, I think," Gordon readily agreed. "But I will return to see you in the morning, Nick."

"Very good," nodded the detective. "You may expect us about seven o'clock."

CHAPTER III.

THE FACE OF A CROOK.

"There are only six hundred Stradivarius violins known to be in existance. Their value varies from ten to ten thousand dollars, but in a few cases these figures are greatly exceeded. Two are said to be worth no less than fifty thousand dollars each. One is the famous Emperor Stradivarius. It is two hundred years old, and the only one comparable with it is that left by Paganini to the city of Genoa. A sum running into five figures sterling was offered for it."

"Gee! That sure is some fiddle, chief," declared Patsy Garvan sententiously.

Nick Carter was having an early breakfast with Chick and his junior assistant before returning to the Strickland apartment on the morning following the robbery. They had nearly finished, when Nick, after a general discussion of the crime, made the foregoing comments concerning that rare make of violin that had been stolen from the elderly German.

"Some fiddle, Patsy, is right," Chick agreed, laughing over his coffee.

"All Strads are very valuable, and many have had a strange and eventful history. Some have been repeatedly stolen, and at times have passed from one uninformed person to another at ridiculously low prices. I recall that one was accepted by a Geneva blacksmith from a traveler who had not money enough to pay for shoeing his horse. It hung for years on a wall in the blacksmith's house, till a collector of violins happened to see and purchase it. Upon cleaning off the dirt and grime he found the Strad mark on it. He had acquired for a paltry sum an instrument worth thousands of dollars."

"That was tough luck for the poor blacksmith, chief."

"Not at all," said Nick. "For the violin collector was as square as a brick. He returned and paid the blacksmith all that the instrument was worth."

"Good on his head!" said Patsy. "He was one man in a thousand."

"Make it ten thousand, Patsy," Chick said dryly.

"The Strad stolen from Strickland is of great value, no doubt, and possibly worth what he has stated," Nick continued. "With the rare old masters he mentioned, together with his antique gems, his collection of jade and the other missing treasures, his loss runs up over a hundred thousand dollars. He will have a complete list for us this morning. We'll get a move on, now, if you are ready."

Followed by both, Nick led the way to his library. His chauffeur, Danny Maloney, had not yet arrived with his touring car, but all three were engaged in putting on their outside garments when the doorbell rang, and Patsy glanced from one of the screened windows.

An erect, muscular, dark-featured man was standing on the front steps, awaiting the coming of Joseph, the detective's butler.

"It's Detective Conroy, of headquarters," said Patsy.

"What sent him here before seven o'clock?" Nick remarked. "He must have something on his mind."

"A case, perhaps, on which he wants to employ us, or ask your advice," Chick suggested.

"I shall take on no case until after I have sifted this robbery to the bottom," Nick said decidedly. "I promised to recover Strickland's stolen treasures, and I'm going to do it."

"That's the stuff, chief," nodded Patsy. "Let's make good, or bu'st a tire."

Joseph ushered in the headquarters man at that moment, and Conroy said at once, with a look of surprise at all:

"Great guns! I hardly expected to find you out of bed, Nick, to say nothing of all hands being ready to leave the house. Something doing, eh?"

"Yes," Nick bowed. "What's on your mind, Conroy?"

"It's in my pocket, Nick, rather than on my mind," said Conroy, smiling. "I have an early appointment at headquarters, but thought I'd take a chance of seeing you for a few moments, as I was passing your house on my way. Have a look at this."

He drew from his pocket while speaking a small photograph, not more than three inches square, which evidently had been snapped with a kodak, or a small camera, when the subject was ignorant of the fact. For he was walking at the time, a man clad in clerical robes, and his face was somewhat shaded from the sun by the broad brim of a black felt hat.

It showed quite distinctly, nevertheless, that he was a man about thirty years old. The smoothly shaved features were of an almost effeminate cast. The square jaw and thin lips denoted firmness, however, with bulldog nerve, tenacity, and determination. His figure evidently was of medium build and in no respect specially distinctive.

Nick took a large reading glass from his desk and viewed the picture quite intently.

"Who is he, Conroy?" he inquired.

"He is without exception, bar none, Nick, the most accomplished, most versatile and original, and for those reasons by far the most dangerous crook now at large in this wicked world," said Detective Conroy forcibly. "That face is a libel on his character. He looks more like a saint than a thief. That is because, perhaps, it was taken while he was posing as a priest in Berlin, where he swindled an Austrian duchess out of jewels worth sixty thousand dollars and got safely away with them. He has a record of which the devil himself would be proud. That's the only photograph of him known to be in existence. That's Mortimer Deland."

Nick knew him by name and reputation, and had read of his knavish exploits in Europe, where most of his evil work had been done; a series of crimes covering a period of nearly ten years, but accomplished with craft and elusiveness that had enabled him to avoid arrest and baffle the trained police of nearly every European country.

Mortimer Deland was, in fact, almost a myth and mystery, so little was known of him aside from the extraordinary crimes that had made his name notorious abroad, and comparatively well known to the police of America.

Nick viewed the photograph with considerable interest, therefore, and then handed it to Chick and Patsy for inspection.

"Where did you get it, Conroy?" he inquired.

"It was sent to me by Jenks, of Scotland Yard," replied the headquarters man. "It was snapped by an English woman who was in Berlin when the robbery of the Austrian duchess was committed."

"There is no doubt about it, you think?"

"Not the slightest. Jenks is absolutely sure that the woman made no mistake and is thoroughly reliable. Here is a copy of Deland's writing, merely the fictitious name he inscribed on a hotel register. Both this and the photograph are entirely reliable."

"Make a tracery copy of the writing, Patsy," Nick directed, handing him the scrap of paper Conroy had taken from his notebook. "We may find it useful, perhaps, sooner or later. Mortimer Deland, eh? If all I have read of him is true, Conroy, it will be a feather in the cap of the man who rounds up the rascal."

"I thought you might wish to see the photograph."

"Very much," Nick nodded. "I'll fix the face in my mind, though the print is too small to be of much value. The writing may prove useful, however."

"I had another reason for dropping in to show them to you."

"What is that?"

"Jenks wrote me that Mortimer Deland is probably in this country, if not in New York City."

"On what does he base that belief?"

"First, on the fact that there has been a complete cessation of Deland's knavish work abroad for more than six months. That is a very long and unusual period for him to be idle. Scarce a month has gone by for six or eight years Nick in which he has not committed a crime of some kind, easily identified as his because of their peculiarly original and crafty character. There is no mistaking his work."

"And the other reason?" questioned Nick.

"Because, though it was not suspected at the time, it now is known that Deland fled from Vienna about six months ago and went to England. He is known to have been in London with a notorious English crook and adventuress named Fannie Coyle, and that they bought passage for Boston more than four months ago. Boston would be poor picking for a man of Mortimer Deland's knavish aspirations, and it's long odds that he was heading for New York, or one of the big Western cities. Be that as it may, Nick, his whereabouts now is unknown."

"Fannie Coyle still is missing from England, I infer?"

"Yes."

"When did you hear from Jenks?"

"Only two days ago. This photograph, or one like it, was given to him about ten days ago. He has clinched the points mentioned since then."

"Did he give you any information about Deland himself, his early life, or his family?"

"Nothing is known about him," said Conroy, shaking his head. "The name probably is an alias. He is said to have as many others as he has hairs in his head. If he is half as clever as the foreign police assert——"

"Here is Danny, chief, with the car," put in Patsy, turning from the window.

"We must be off, Conroy," said Nick, returning the photograph. "I'm glad you came in, however, and I will keep Deland in mind. Let me know if you hear anything more about him."

"I will, Nick, surely," Conroy nodded, while he accompanied the three detectives from the house and proceeded on his way to police headquarters.

Ten minutes later Nick's touring car rounded a corner of Fifth Avenue and stopped in front of the Vanhausen building.

The inclosed black wagon of an undertaker was standing in front of the Vaughn residence, also a hack, at the open door of which the driver was waiting.

The casket had been brought out and placed in the great, somber wagon, the rear door of which still was open. The undertaker's assistant was bringing out the last of the numerous boxes of flowers, which nearly filled the wagon.

Preceded by the undertaker, just as Nick and Chick alighted from the touring car, Gerald Vaughn emerged from the house with Clarissa and closed the door.

"They are just leaving for Springfield with the body," Chick remarked in an undertone to Nick.

Gerald Vaughn observed them and bowed gravely, while he descended the steps with his sister, who was heavily veiled. He placed her in the carriage, then turned and said a few words to the undertaker, afterward approaching the detectives, who were but a few feet away.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said, bowing and smiling faintly. "I have seen Mr. Strickland for a few moments this morning. He is much more composed than he was last night. I wish I might do more than merely wish you speedy success."

"Many thanks," Chick replied.

"We shall do all that we can with the case," Nick added.

Vaughn bowed again, then turned away and entered the waiting carriage. The door closed with a bang. The hackman mounted to his box, caught up the reins, then drove rapidly away.

The undertaker's wagon already had departed.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT DAYLIGHT REVEALED.

Nick Carter found Mr. Rudolph Strickland and his niece awaiting him, but Arthur Gordon had not yet arrived.

"I have talked with him by telephone, Mr. Carter, and he now is on his way here," said Wilhelmina, after their greeting.

"There is nothing he can do to aid us," Nick replied. "We shall set at work at once, and you must remain here with Mr. Strickland. Find out, Patsy, whether the photographer on the floor above has arrived. He promised to come down early this morning."

Patsy hastened from the parlor in which they had been received, while Nick and Chick at once proceeded to the rear rooms.

"We'll begin with the bathroom," said Nick, leading the way. "Daylight may reveal more than I was able to discover last night. Ah, by Jove, I thought so."

He had entered the bathroom and raised the lower section of the small, ground-glass window. A glance at the stone sill outside, which he then began to inspect with a powerful lens, evoked his last more forcible remark.

"It's what I do not find," Nick replied. "Notice the lack of dust on the upper surface of this stone. All that remains of the thin layer which ordinarily would be there is a small quantity next to each casing. The lens

shows, too, that it has been rubbed in each direction, as if with a piece of cloth, or a garment."

"Plainly enough," Chick agreed. "It would be indiscernible, nevertheless, except in a bright light."

"That was the difficulty last evening. We had not light enough."

"You now suspect——"

"More than suspect," Nick interrupted. "I now am convinced that one of the crooks, at least, entered through this window."

"But how could he have reached it? There certainly was no ladder used, or the janitor must have heard him. Nor is there any other window from which the rascal could have reached this one."

"If not from below, Chick, he must have come from above."

"From the photographer's room?"

"Or from the roof."

"Either would be possible," Chick allowed. "But we discovered no evidence of it. Besides, Strickland stated that the bathroom door was locked, and Gordon found it so when they entered."

"That would have been no barrier to a crook clever enough to pull off a job of this kind. He would have pushed out the key and—stop a bit! We may find evidence of it."

Turning back, Nick removed the key from the bathroom door to examine it with his lens. He quickly found what he was seeking.

"Here we have it," he added. "The end projecting beyond the tongue has been gripped with a pair of nippers. Notice the marks they left on it. The rascal unlocked the door by turning the key with the nippers, relocking it by the same means before he left the flat."

"You think he went out through this window."

"I do. The chances are ten to one, if he had left by way of the front door, that Madame Denise would have seen him."

"He is some athlete, by Jove, if he climbed a rope to the roof, or even to the photographer's window," Chick declared.

"He had confederates who aided him," Nick replied. "He could not have got away with such a quantity of plunder without assistance."

"Surely not."

"Let's have a look at the bedroom window."

Nick led the way into the room where, still using his lens, he began a thorough inspection of the window lock, the sashes and panes, and finally the interior sill and the outside stonework.

All that he found of any significance were a few tiny particles on the sill, hardly discernible without a lens, but which, when viewed through it, appeared to be short, yellow bristles, or hairs.

Quick to detect their true character and significance, however, Nick said, quite abruptly:

"I am right, by Jove, in that a rope was used. Here are particles of hemp on the sill. A rope, or a hemp cord of smaller size, was drawn in through this window."

"But why did the rascal use this window, Nick, after entering through that in the bathroom?" Chick questioned.

Nick leaned out and gazed upward.

"I have it," he replied. "A rope evidently was used for removing the plunder through this window, which is much larger than that in the bathroom. It was not lowered to the rear area, however, for there is no exit to the street. Nor was it drawn up to the quarters of Gilbert, the photographer, or we would have found evidence of it last night. It must have been drawn up to the roof, therefore, and then transferred by some means to another building, or——"

"What's up?" Chick cried, interrupting.

Nick had drawn back into the room with an abruptness that startled his assistant, even more than the altered expression on his strong, clean-cut face.

"I think, Chick, we've been fooled."

"Fooled? What the deuce do you mean?"

"I mean——"

Nick did not remain to say what he meant. Instead, with a sharper light leaping up in his eyes, he strode hurriedly to the front parlor, in which Mr. Strickland and Wilhelmina then were seated.

"You told me last evening, Mr. Strickland, that Gerald Vaughn and his sister are old friends of yours. How long have you known them?" he asked, pausing in the middle of the room.

"Why, only since they have lived next door, Mr. Carter," was the reply, with a look of surprise.

"How long is that?"

"About four months, as near as I can remember."

"They do not own the corner house, then?"

"Oh, no. It is owned by Colonel Morgan Barker, who has been living abroad with his wife and two daughters for nearly a year. Their children are studying music in Berlin. The Vaughns met them, and, as they were about to visit New York for a few months, they arraanged with Colonel Barker to occupy his furnished house during their stay here."

"Who is Colonel Barker's agent in New York?"

"Mr. John Archer, I believe, who has an office in Broadway. Mr. Vaughn brought a letter to him from Colonel Barker, directing him to let him occupy the house, and——"

"And turn, unless I am much mistaken, as crafty a trick as one often hears of," Nick interrupted, with more austerity than he ordinarily displayed. "Come with me, Chick, and—ah, here is Patsy. What do you say? Has the photographer arrived?"

"Mr. Gilbert has just gone up, chief," said Patsy, who had entered while Nick was speaking.

"Come, then, both of you," said Nick, without further explanations.

He hurried from the room, followed by both Chick and Patsy, and led the way to the top floor. The photographer had just unlocked the door of his studio.

"Good morning, Gilbert," Nick greeted him familiarly. "I want to visit your roof once more."

"Certainly, Nick, as many times as you wish. Go ahead. You know the way."

Nick already was on his way to the rear room, where he quickly mounted the ladder and opened the scuttle leading to the roof. One after another the three detectives climbed out.

It presented in the bright morning sunlight a much different appearance from that of the night before. There was much less danger of a slip and a fall to the pavements far below. Nick at once approached the rear edge of it, at a point directly over the window of the

bedroom in the Strickland flat. Some of the gravel near the edge had been brushed away. Crouching to gaze over, Nick made a discovery that immediately confirmed his increasing suspicions.

In the upper surface of the timber forming the edge of the roof were four holes, somewhat less than a foot apart, and which evidently had been recently made with four large screws.

"Here we have it," Nick cried, when Chick and Patsy approached. "There has been a rigging of some kind screwed to this timber."

"Gee! that's as plain as twice two, chief," said Patsy.

"Notice that it is directly in line with the chimney, which is less than eight feet from the edge of the roof. If I am not mistaken—no, I am right," Nick broke off; then added confidently, rising to inspect the chimney. "Here are splinters of wood on some of the bricks, also particles evidently rubbed from a rope. Here in the gravel beyond the chimney, too, are indications that the end of a piece of joist rested."

"You think, then——"

"The evidence speaks for itself," Nick interposed. "A long piece of joist made fast to the chimney was run out over an ordinary sawhorse, I judge, which was fastened to a strip of board securely screwed to the edge of the roof. A rope from the outer end of the joist, or a rigging of some kind, enabled one of the crooks to descend to the windows of the Strickland flat."

"But it would have hung opposite the bedroom window," said Chick, gazing down.

"He could easily have swung himself to the bathroom window."

"Gee! it would have been some stunt, chief, in the wind and darkness," said Patsy.

"We are up against rascals capable of more desperate deeds than that," Nick declared. "I think we now can learn where they came from and what more they did. Come with me."

Quickly crossing the roof, Nick approached the edge overlooking the roof of the corner residence. The latter was only five feet below, with no space between them, and he immediately dropped over the edge, followed by Chick and Patsy.

Nearly in the middle of the roof was a square skylight, to which all three hastened, and through which Nick peered intently. He could see only part of the upper hall some eight feet below and the closed doors of two adjoining rooms.

"By Jove, we are on the right track," Chick remarked. "This skylight has been recently opened."

He pointed to some blurred finger marks in the dust on the panes and sashes, and Nick drew a knife from his pocket with which to force open the slightly sloping window.

"I'm so sure I am right that we will not stand on ceremony," he said, a bit grimly. "The birds have flown. The house probably is deserted. The plunder we are seeking has been carried away under our very noses."

"You don't mean in that undertaker's wagon, chief?" cried Patsy.

"That's precisely what I mean."

"Gee whiz! The death of the housekeeper then——"

"There has been no death," Nick interrupted, all the while at work trying to pry open the skylight. "The whole business is a craftily planned job, from the time Gerald Vaughn, so called, met Colonel Barker in Berlin, if he really did meet him there, and learned that this house was to be vacant for several months. We'll soon find out whether I am right and—ah, now it gives. Lend a hand, Chick, and we can raise it."

Nick had contrived to partly remove the hook that secured the skylight, and it then proved easy to raise the latter.

"Close it after us, Patsy, and return by the way we came," Nick directed. "Say nothing about what we have found and are doing. Go down to the front door of this house and wait for me to admit you."

"I'm wise, chief," said Patsy. "I'll nail any one who attempts to leave."

"There is no one in the house," Nick repeated. "I'm sure of that. Come with me, Chick."

He turned with the last and dropped down to the upper hall, Chick quickly following him.

"We'll cover the ground as we go," he added. "These rooms, Chick, to begin with."

They found in the first one they entered the evidence confirming Nick's deductions and suspicions—a piece of joist about ten feet long, a sawhorse fixed on a baseboard, that had been secured to the upper edge of the roof, a coil of rope, a block and tackle, a broad wicker basket nearly three feet long, to each end handle of which was tied a long hemp cord.

"Great guns, this does settle it!" Chick exclaimed. "What kind of a rigging is it? What use had they for this huge basket?"

A brief inspection of the several articles enabled Nick to hit upon the truth.

"It's perfectly plain, Chick," he replied. "That basket was hung from the end of the joist and lowered to Strickland's bedroom window. That was done after one of the crooks had descended and entered through the bathroom. He probably was the only one in Strickland's flat. Notice the long cord on each end of the basket."

"What do you make of them?"

"One was used to draw the suspended basket to a window of this house, the other to draw it back again to that in Strickland's bedroom. The crook in that apartment loaded the basket with portions of the plunder, as speedily as he could transfer it to the bedroom, and his confederate then drew it to a window of this house and unloaded it. There is no telling how many times that was repeated. Another confederate was probably at work on the roof, from which he could easily have guided the basket and in other ways assisted the thief in the flat below. That's how it was done, Chick, as sure as fate."

"By Jove, I believe you are right."

"This rigging tells the story."

"But why the alleged death of the housekeeper, the casket, the flowers, the——"

"It may be explained with a breath," Nick interrupted. "Vaughn evidently is an exceedingly clever crook, also the two women who have been living here with him. They became friendly with Strickland only to learn his habits and the feasibility of this job. It was planned for last evening, and the rascals would have found a way to lure him from the flat, even if his niece and Arthur Gordon had not saved them the trouble."

"No doubt," Chick quickly allowed.

"They foresaw that they could not remove the plunder in any ordinary way, so they devised this method to bring

it to this house." Nick continued. "They knew, too, that the crime would soon be discovered; so soon, in fact, that it would be hazardous to attempt getting away with their booty from this house on the same night."

"So they faked the death of the housekeeper, in order to avert suspicion and a consequent search of the house," Chick remarked. "Is that your view of it?"

"Exactly," Nick nodded. "They reasoned rightly that crooks would not be suspected of operating from a house in which a death had occurred and the corpse still was lying. The wreath on the door, the casket in the parlor, the boxes presumably containing flowers—these have completely fooled us, Chick, partly because of Strickland's statement that the Vaughns were friends of his. I supposed, of course, that they were old residents here. If he had told me what he stated this morning, I would at once have suspected something wrong."

"Certainly," said Chick. "I see the point."

"But the casket and boxes contained, instead of a corpse and supposed floral tokens, the very plunder we were seeking," Nick added, with ominous grimness. "The rascals got away with it this morning and under our very eyes. The whole business was more cunning and crafty than we often run up against."

"There is no denying that Nick, for fair."

"Let's look farther. We'll see what more we can find. It will be little enough, I imagine. The rascals have cleaned out their own belongings, no doubt, and have no intention of returning. They realized that a daylight investigation would surely expose their game."

Nick's prediction proved to be correct. Several of the bedrooms on the floor below were in shocking disorder. Beds had been left unmade. Wardrobe closets were empty. Bureau drawers contained nothing but the dust and rubbish left by the miscreants. There appeared to be not the slightest clew to their true identity.

Nick glanced sharply through the several rooms, then hastened down to the ground floor. There the dining room and kitchen were in corresponding disorder. Soiled dishes and the remnants of breakfast stood on the table.

"We'll have a look in the library," said Nick, leading the way. "There is Patsy at the front door. You had better admit him."

Chick hastened to do so.

Nick entered the library.

A sheet of paper was propped up conspicuously against a book on the table. It contained several pen-written lines.

Nick took up the sheet and read them:

"My Dear Carter: You solve the problem tardily. You arrive a little too late. There will be nothing for you in attempting to run down the writer. He is in a class of his own—and much your superior. Take a tip from me, therefore, and drop this matter. Don't dig deeper into it, or you'll surely tread on a rattlesnake. A word to the wise should be sufficient, or this warning from

Gerald Vaughn."

Nick Carter's face underwent a quick change. He had made a discovery which Gerald Vaughn had not for a moment anticipated. He recognized the writing, or felt reasonably sure that he did.

It was identical with the fine, clean-cut hand exhibited by Detective Conroy that morning—the writing of Mortimer Deland.

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICIONS VERIFIED.

Nick Carter knew that he had found one important clew, at least, in the threatening communication which had been left there by Gerald Vaughn, as the latter had been known while occupying the Colonel Barker residence.

The very audacity of it, moreover, was additional evidence of the true identity of the writer. For it corresponded with many a previous display of effrontery which had, in connection with his extraordinary crimes, made the name of Mortimer Deland notorious.

Nick turned and displayed the letter when Chick and Patsy entered.

"Do you recognize the hand?" he inquired.

"By Jove, it looks like that which Conroy showed us," Chick said quickly. "I can almost swear to it."

"I think so, too."

"We can clinch it easily enough, chief," put in Patsy. "I still have the tracery I made. We came away in such a hurry, chief, that I did not put it in your desk."

"Let me see it," said Nick. "I will compare them."

It took him only a moment to satisfy himself that he was right. There were peculiarities in the fine, feminine hand that left him no shadow of a doubt.

"It is dead open and shut," he declared. "Vaughn is none other than Mortimer Deland. The bizarre character of this crime, moreover, is directly in line with his work abroad."

"That's true, chief, for fair," said Patsy. "Who else would have thought of using a casket, florist's boxes, and an undertaker's wagon for getting away with a big lot of plunder? The job——"

"Spells Mortimer Deland, Patsy, in capital letters." Nick interrupted. "His alleged sister undoubtedly is Fannie Coyle, the English female crook Conroy mentioned."

"Gee! that's right, too."

"The housekeeper said to have died is another confederate," Nick added. "She probably is an American woman, however, since such an assistant would have been required by comparative strangers here."

"The undertaker and his assistant, also, must be in league with them," Chick agreed.

"Yes, undoubtedly," Nick agreed. "Otherwise, the two men would have detected and exposed the fraud. They would have known whether the casket contained a corpse and the pasteboard boxes a quantity of flowers, or whether they were packed with other articles. They could not have been so egregiously deceived, even though they did not open them, and were employed only to take them to a railway station."

"Surely not, Nick, if they have brains," Chick declared. "That's the point I had in mind."

"I shall not be surprised if we find the casket still in the house, and that only the outside box was used for removing the plunder. It would contain more and could be more easily packed."

"Let's find out," said Chick. "The casket was on a bier in the parlor last evening."

He led the way while speaking, and again Nick's prediction proved to be correct. The casket was found standing on end behind the parlor door. The standards on which it had rested the previous evening were back of a sofa. The entire robbery was, as Nick had said, of a bizarre character and originality of conception that alone

proclaimed the identity of the knave who had designed and directed it.

"There appears to be nothing for us, now, but to get after the rascals," said Chick, a bit impatiently. "They have a start of more than an hour. We may be able to trace them, nevertheless, if we get a move on and——"

"We shall be more likely to meet with success, Chick, if we make haste slowly," Nick interposed. "There is no telling where they have gone. It is perfectly safe to assume, nevertheless, that they did not go to a railway station, as stated. They will not let others handle those boxes, nor attempt to transport them in any other conveyance than the wagon with which they are provided."

"But it's an undertaker's wagon, Nick, and we ought to be able to trace it," Chick argued, more forcibly.

"There are a hundred such wagons on the move this morning, Chick, and it would be impossible to trace this particular one," Nick insisted. "There would be nothing in that."

"You may be right."

"I know I am right. We must take advantage of the difficulties involving the rascals themselves, instead of going up against those they have put in our way."

"You mean?"

"No undertaker is engaged in this robbery," Nick said confidently. "Deland and his confederates have contrived in some way to obtain a casket, the florist's boxes, and an undertaker's team. We must find out where they came from, if possible, and try to discover the identity of Deland's male confederates."

"The supposed undertaker and his assistant?"

"Exactly. They probably are local crooks, also the woman who posed as the housekeeper. If we can identify one of them, even, we shall have picked up a thread that may lead us to the entire gang."

"There is something in that," Chick admitted.

"The trunks containing the belongings of the three crooks who have been living here must have been taken away several days ago, or by night, perhaps," Nick went on. "Deland would not have deferred their removal until this morning."

"Surely not."

"It is barely possible, of course, that the hackman who was here this morning was in league with them, but I do not think it probable. We must hunt him up, therefore, and find out where he took Deland and Fannie Coyle this morning."

"You appear to have no doubt of their identity, Nick?"

"Not the slightest."

"Gee! it looks like a cinch, chief, for fair," put in Patsy.

"Bear in mind, too, that we have one unsuspected advantage over this rascal," Nick added.

"What is that?"

"He doesn't even dream, of course, that we are informed of his identity. He undoubtedly has been living here in disguise. He will discard it, now, and take another alias, confident that no one will recognize him, or even think of Mortimer Deland as the perpetrator of this robbery."

"That's more than likely, Nick, and we ought to derive some advantage from it."

"I think we shall, Chick, having seen the photograph Conroy brought round. Feeling thus confident, moreover, Deland is daring enough to go straight to a first-class hotel with Fannie Coyle, posing in entirely new characters. It will be well to inspect some of the hotel registers in search of his writing."

"There are possibilities in all that, Nick," Chick readily admitted.

"Bear in mind, too, the difficulties involved in disposing of the plunder from an undertaker's wagon," said Nick. "Where would the rascals take it? Not to a private residence, for the wagon would attract the attention of the neighbors and give rise to inquiries that might result in speedy exposure. If taken to an isolated house, the wagon would be seen going there and investigations might follow. The rascals would not take those chances."

"I agree with you," Chick nodded.

"Nor would they trust their load to any railway company, nor to transportation by others."

"Surely not."

"How, then, would they dispose of it? Where would they naturally take it?"

"That's the question, Nick."

"Gee! it's some question, too."

"They might, of course, drive to some point out of the city, where they could transfer it undetected to an ordinary wagon, in which it could be quickly taken to some place of concealment. Or it might be hidden in some woodland section and afterward removed."

"There really seems to be no other safe way of disposing of it," said Chick.

"Don't be too sure of that," Nick advised. "Deland is crafty and ingenious. He may have hit upon an entirely different method, one so novel and original that it does not occur to us."

"Possibly."

"Be that as it may, Chick, we will take up the trail as we find it," Nick said abruptly. "I will return to Strickland's apartments and give him a few instructions, then I'll be off for a talk with the agent in charge of this house. He may impart something worth knowing."

"It's worth trying, at least."

"You get next to a telephone and a directory, in the meantime, and call up all of the local undertakers. Find out whether one of them has an extra wagon and has rented it, or——"

"I understand," Chick cut in with a nod.

"Learn what you can from him, in that case, and be governed accordingly."

"Trust me for that."

"While we are thus engaged, Patsy, you get after the cabmen and the local express drivers. Find out, if possible, who took away——"

"The crooks' trunks," put in Patsy. "I've got you, chief, hands down. You don't need to tell me what to do in a case of this kind."

"Very good," said Nick. "Telephone to the house any discovery you may make, providing circumstances prevent you from returning. Otherwise, we'll meet there, as usual. That's all—except to dig in, tooth and nail, to trace these rascals."

It then was nine o'clock.

Precisely two hours had passed since the departure of Mortimer Deland and Fannie Coyle—and the undertaker's wagon filled with the stolen treasures.

CHAPTER VI.

A MAN OF NERVE.

While Nick Carter returned to the Strickland flat to impart such information and instructions as would serve his purpose, Chick Carter parted from Patsy on the corner of Fifth Avenue, then hastened home to use the telephone and directory.

Instead of calling up the local undertakers, however, Chick decided that he first would ascertain from police headquarters whether the theft of such extraordinary articles as a casket and an undertaker's team had been reported to the police. He had no great hope of hitting the trail so quickly—but he was agreeably disappointed.

"Yes, Chick, sure!" was the reply by a sergeant who responded, and to whom the detective had mentioned his name. "Both were stolen three days ago from Michael Hanlon, a Harlem undertaker."

"I have seen nothing published about it," said Chick.

"The facts have been suppressed pending an investigation."

"Do you know any of the details?"

"No, nothing more. I will get them for you."

"I will not trouble you. I will look them up for myself."

"Do you know anything about the case?"

"No more than you," Chick replied evasively.

He then hung up the receiver and started for Harlem to interview Michael Hanlon, and in search for more definite evidence.

Very little could be found, however, nor could Hanlon impart much information. He stated that the casket had been stolen from a storeroom in the basement of his establishment, and the wagon from a stable back of the building, both occupying a lot adjoining his residence.

The stable opened upon a side street, however, and the wagon evidently had been drawn out and taken away with a horse belonging to the thieves, his own not having been removed from its stall.

"If it had been, Mr. Carter, I should have heard the rascals," Hanlon declared, after imparting the foregoing facts. "I would have heard the hoofs on the floor."

"That probably is the only reason why the crooks brought a horse of their own and drew out the wagon quietly," said Chick.

"Most likely."

"The police could find no clew to their identity, eh?"

"No, sir. The rascals got away clean enough, sir, and I am out the casket and the wagon, I'm thinking," Hanlon grumbled bitterly.

Chick then had nothing to offer him in the way of encouragement, having found no evidence worthy of note, and he returned to the nearest elevated station, alighting from the train half an hour later at Forty-second Street.

It then was after one o'clock, too late for lunch at home. Chick decided to take it in one of the excellent hotels in that locality. As he was about to enter the café, however, one of Nick's earlier suggestions occurred to him.

"There might be something in it," he muttered. "I'll go up to the office, instead, and have a look at the register."

He did so—and verified the sagacity of the famous detective.

Almost the first entry that met Chick's gaze, inscribed in the same fine, clean-cut hand of which he had seen specimens that day, was that of:

"Charles F. Brooks and wife, Washington, D. C."

"Great guns!" thought Chick, surprised in spite of himself. "Have I really cornered the rats so quickly? If that isn't Deland's hand, or that of Gerald Vaughn, at least, I'll eat my hat."

Instead of plunging over the traces, however, Chick turned to the clerk and remarked:

"I see that Mr. and Mrs. Brooks are here, from Washington."

"Yes, they arrived this morning," said the clerk, smiling.

"Are they frequent visitors?"

"Well, quite so."

"Not strangers, then?"

"Oh, no; they are here each month, and sometimes more frequently."

Chick took a blank card from a tray and wrote a fictitious name on it, adding that of a leading newspaper.

"Send this up to their suite, please," he requested. "They may like to be mentioned in the society notes."

"Yes, certainly," nodded the clerk. "Front! To 710."

"If they are mentioned in the society notes I anticipate, however, I'll wager they will not like it," Chick mentally added.

The bell hop in blue and brass returned in a very few minutes.

"You are to come up, sir," he announced. "This way, sir."

Chick followed him to the elevator.

"They certainly apprehend nothing," he reasoned. "They may, as Nick inferred, feel entirely safe from suspicion, or absolutely sure that their identity and connection with the robbery cannot be established. I'll wager, however, that I can take the wind out of their sails. If they don't weaken when they see me, or betray some sign of recognition—well, their nerve will surpass that of a wooden Indian. I'm dead sure I'm not mistaken. There is no mistaking that writing. They must be the suspected couple, in spite of the clerk's statements about them, or I'm no judge of——"

Chick had arrived at the door of the suite and his train of thought ended.

The page knocked on the door, then bowed and hurried away.

A voice within called agreeably:

"Come in!"

Chick opened the door and was met in the entrance hall by an erect, slender man in a plaid suit. His face was as fair and smooth as that of a girl. His skin was peculiarly clear and pale, though his complexion was dark and his eyes remarkably brilliant.

Chick had staggered for a moment. The face was like that of Gerald Vaughn, yet not like it. The flowing, black mustache was gone, and there was no sign of it, nor of a beard, through this man's clear, white skin.

It was, too, like the photographed face of Mortimer Deland, but that was so small as to preclude positive identification.

What most amazed Chick, however, was the fact that he was received without the slightest sign of recognition, without the least betrayal of perturbation, despite that his visit could not possibly have been anticipated.

For all this, nevertheless, Chick instantly came to one positive conclusion—a correct one.

"He's my man!" flashed through his mind. "This is Gerald Vaughn—and Mortimer Deland. I'll stake my life on it."

While Chick was thus taking his measure, Deland was approaching from an attractively furnished parlor, bowing and smiling.

"Walk in, Mr. Alden," said he, glancing at the card he still retained in his slender, white hand. "Walk in and have a chair. Let me introduce my wife, Mrs. Brooks."

Chick again was staggered—even more staggered than before.

The woman who arose to greet him was tall and fair. She was fashionably clad. Her eyes were blue. Her hair was a deep-auburn hue. Her smile was captivating. Her teeth were like pearls.

She bore not the slightest resemblance to Clarissa Vaughn.

She was not even remotely suggestive of the black-veiled figure that had left the Barker residence that morning in company with Gerald Vaughn.

Chick steadied himself. He realized on the instant that he was up against a man, or couple, fully as crafty, daring, and farsighted as the letter left for Nick had implied. He realized, too, in view of their absolute unconcern, that he had perhaps gone a step too far, and that they might be prepared to foil the best work he could do at that time.

For the recovery of the stolen Strickland treasures was of even greater importance to him, in so far as the outcome of the case was concerned, than the positive identification and arrest of Mortimer Deland and his companion.

That this woman was Fannie Coyle, however, Chick felt reasonably sure—and again he was right.

"I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Alden, I'm sure," said the woman, smiling graciously and extending her hand.

"Thank you," said Chick, bowing.

"Have a chair," Deland repeated. "Your card states that you are a newspaper man, a reporter. Why, may I ask, have you favored us with a call? Am I to be subjected to an interview?"

"Would you object to it?" Chick inquired tentatively.

Deland laughed slightly and displayed his teeth.

"Not at all," he replied. "I would, in fact, rather like it. It would be amusing to see my name in print. I'll be glad to give you any information I possess, on whatever subject I can enlighten you."

"That is very kind, Mr. Vaughn, I'm sure," said Chick, steadily eying him.

"Vaughn?" queried Deland, with brows lifted.

Fannie Coyle laughed audibly.

"Pardon. I got my names mixed," Chick said dryly, observing that he had evoked no sign of apprehension. "I'm looking into a case of robbery committed in Fifth Avenue last night, of which a man named Gerald Vaughn is suspected."

"Ah, I see," Deland exclaimed pleasantly. "That is why you happened to call me by that name."

"Exactly."

"The mistake is quite pardonable, Charles, I'm sure," remarked the woman.

"Yes, indeed," Deland bowed agreeably. "We know, of course, that Mr. Alden has not called to interview us about a robbery."

"I should think not. That would be absurd."

"I leave it to you, Mr. Alden."

"On the contrary, Mr. Brooks, that is the only reason why I have called," said Chick.

"Ah, is it possible?" questioned Deland, with unruffled suavity. "Well, that does surprise me. What information do you expect from me?"

"Any that you can give me."

"But I cannot give you any," insisted Deland, with a ripple of laughter. "I know nothing about the case, nor the person you have mentioned. What led you to infer that I do?"

Chick abruptly decided on another tack.

"Only because Vaughn is known to be a resident of Washington," said he. "Observing on the hotel register that you dwell in that city, I thought you might possibly know of him, or have heard of him. If you do not——"

"Let me assure you at once, Mr. Alden, on that point," Deland put in smiling. "I never heard of him."

"Nor I, Charles, I'm sure," observed the woman.

"Lest you may entertain any erroneous suspicions, Mr. Alden, let me call up the proprietor of the hotel," Deland added, rising to go to the telephone. "He knows me very well. He will vouch for me. He will assure you that I am entirely veracious and——"

"Pardon!" Chick checked him with a gesture, rising to go. "Do nothing of the kind. Your word alone, Mr. Brooks, is quite sufficient. I had not the slightest idea that you know anything about the robbery. I thought merely that you might know Vaughn, or have heard of him."

"I do not, Mr. Alden, I assure you."

"I now am convinced of it, and am sorry I troubled you."

"No trouble whatever," said Deland, extending his hand. "I am, on the contrary, very pleased we met you. Such episodes really amuse me. I hope to meet you again, Mr. Alden."

"We shall meet again, all right," Chick said grimly to himself after departing. "We shall meet again, Mr. Deland, and I'll then fit bracelets on your slender, white wrists. Bluff me, eh? Give me the laugh, will you? I'll cram all that down your throat a little later. At the same time, by Jove, I give you credit for more nerve and audacity than any rascal I have recently met. But I'll get you, all right, at the proper time."

Chick had only one reason for not arresting Deland then and there. The attitude of the rascal, together with the assurance he had displayed, convinced Chick that the stolen property had been disposed of in some locality felt to be perfectly safe, and that its recovery might be perverted by the immediate arrest of this couple.

"I'll wait a while and watch them," he said to himself, while returning to the elevator. "I know that I have given them a fright, despite the coolness of both, and they surely will make some move that will put me in right."

Apprehending that it might be made immediately, Chick found concealment under the rise of stairs, from which he could see the door of suite 10.

He waited and watched for more than an hour, but no one left or visited the suite, and he then returned to the hotel office and talked with the proprietor.

The latter confirmed the statements already made by the

clerk, that the couple had been occasional guests of the house during several months, and were supposed to be reputable Washington people. Beyond that, however, he knew nothing about them.

"Deland is crafty," thought Chick, after the interview. "He wanted to establish some place to which he could flee, if necessary, divested of the disguise he has been wearing in the character of Gerald Vaughn, and where his pretensions would be backed up in a measure by the hotel proprietor. That has been his object in coming here occasionally with Fannie Coyle.

"But what has become of the dark woman I saw last night? It was she who left the Barker residence with Deland this morning. By Jove, I have it. Fannie Coyle was the housekeeper. She has been stopping here since her pretended death. I'll have the entire gang, too, before I quit this trail."

Chick continued to wait and watch. Twice he telephoned home to communicate with Nick or Patsy, but neither of them had returned, and he decided to continue playing a lone hand.

That afternoon waned and early evening came, and Chick could see from the street that the windows of suite 710 were brightly lighted. He felt reasonably sure that neither of its occupants had departed.

Returning to the hotel office about seven o'clock, he heard the ringing of the telephone bell, and then the voice of the clerk addressing a hallboy, just approaching from a side corridor.

"It's 710," called the clerk. "A taxi is wanted."

"Mullen is at the side door, sir," replied the hallboy.

"Good enough! Tell him to wait there."

"All right, sir."

Chick Carter had pricked up his ears, and his eyes were glowing more brightly.

"A taxi, eh?" he muttered, heading for the side door. "By the rats, in 710, eh? By Jove, here's my chance. It's Mullen for mine.'

CHAPTER VII.

PLAYING A LONE HAND.

Patsy Garvan, following the instructions Nick Carter had given him, did not ring a bull's-eye until four o'clock that afternoon. He then rounded up the hackman he had been seeking.

Patsy recognized his face and discovered him standing beside his carriage in front of a hotel in Forty-fourth Street.

"You're the very man I want," said he, confronting him. "Have a look at this."

Patsy displayed the detective badge under the lap of his vest. Sharply watching the hackman's ruddy face, however, he saw at a glance that his hearer felt no alarm, or consternation, as would have been the case if he was guilty of anything wrong. His countenance took on a look of mild surprise, nevertheless, and he surprised Patsy, also, by saying, with a sort of gruff heartiness:

"You don't need to show me that, Garvan."

"Ah, you know me, then?" said Patsy.

"Sure. There are mighty few dicks I don't know by sight. None in your class, Garvan, as far as that goes."

"Thanks," smiled Patsy. "What's your name?"

"Pat Mulligan."

"A namesake of mine, eh?"

"I reckon so," grinned Mulligan. "What d'ye want? I know you have not started a spiel with me for nothing."

"This is between us, mind you."

"That goes."

"You took a couple from a house in Fifth Avenue at seven o'clock this morning."

"Sure. Where the stiff was being taken away."

"That's the place. What do you know about the couple?"

"Nothing," said Mulligan, but a curious gleam lighted his eyes. "I went there on a telephone order."

"Where did you take them?"

"Grand Central Terminal. They had no luggage, so I did not go in with them. That was the last I saw of them."

"Did you see the undertaker's wagon again?"

"Not after it left the house," said Mulligan. "I supposed it was heading for the station baggage room. I know nothing more about it."

"I believe you, Mulligan," said Patsy. "You know something, nevertheless, that you have not told me. I can read that in your eyes."

"You've got keen ones, Garvan, all right," Mulligan said, with a laugh. "'Tain't much."

"Come across. What is it?"

"I've seen a woman coming out of that house who don't stand ace high. She pretends to be all right, but between you and me, Garvan, she's as clever and crooked a jade as you'll find from Harlem to the Battery. Harlem—that's where she hangs out when at home."

"What is her name?" questioned Patsy, with increasing interest.

"Nell Margate."

"Any relation to Jim Margate, of Harlem?"

"She's his sister."

"H'm, is that so?" thought Patsy, who not only knew Jim Margate personally, but also knew him to be a decidedly bad character. "Margate's sister, eh? If you knew Nell Margate to be in that house, Mulligan, why didn't you tip some one to the fact?"

"A dick?"

"Yes"

"Why would I?" said Mulligan, with a deprecatory shake of his head. "It was no funeral of mine. How could I know why she was there?"

"A crook is always out for crooked work."

"But I'm not hired to catch them, Garvan, like you," said Mulligan. "Many a crook has paid me good money. It isn't up to me to stool-pigeon for the police. I've got to shut my eyes and keep my trap closed, or I might get mine for not doing it. I wouldn't have mentioned this, only I know I might get in wrong from not telling you, since you've questioned me about it."

"Is there anything more you can tell me?" asked Patsy.

"Divil a thing. You've got all I can hand you."

"When did you see Nell Margate leaving the Barker residence?"

"Something like a week ago."

"Describe her."

"She's a well-built, dark girl, about twenty-five years old," Mulligan responded. "She's a good looker, Garvan, and makes the most of it. Being clever, too, she gets by with many a stunt. I happen to know all this, Garvan, because Jim Margate's place isn't far from my own."

"In one of the outskirts, isn't it?"

"Yes, pretty well out. The old man used to run it for a road house. There's been nothing doing since he died—that is, nothing on the surface," Mulligan pointedly added.

Patsy knew what he meant—that Margate's place was the resort of crooks. He slipped Mulligan a bank note, remarking:

"Forget it—also what we have said."

"Bet you!"

"So long."

Patsy stepped into the hotel and tried to telephone to Nick, but Joseph told him that he had not returned; also that Chick, though he had telephoned an hour before, had left no message.

"Nothing doing," thought Patsy, returning to the street. "I'll keep going, then, on my own hook. Nell Margate, eh? She was the woman Chick saw last night. Mulligan's description fits her to the letter."

"I guess it's up to me, by Jove, to have a look at Jim Margate's place. It's no crazy bet that Deland and Nell Margate are there, if not the whole knavish bunch. I'll soon find out."

Patsy already was acting upon these resolutions.

Nearly an hour later, or soon after five o'clock, found him stealing cautiously along a sparsely settled road within half a mile of the Harlem River, his features carefully disguised, and his movements those of one having no definite destination in view.

Presently, nevertheless, after crossing a number of vacant lots piled with refuse and rubbish, Patsy picked his way through the trees and underbrush still covering a belt of land in that section, and finally brought up back of an old stable and dwelling fronting on another road, from which both were somewhat shut in by a few remaining trees. The surroundings were uninviting; however, and the place somewhat isolated.

Having shaped a course that precluded observation from the windows of the old wooden house, Patsy crawled under a fence back of the stable, and succeeded in finding concealment in an old shed near by, from which he could see the back door and windows of the dwelling.

It appeared to be deserted. Most of the faded curtains were drawn down. The door of the near stable was closed, moreover, denoting that it was unoccupied. The yard in front of it and the ill-kept grounds surrounding the house looked desolate and dismal in the waning light of the cloudy November day.

"Gee! it don't look much like business," muttered Patsy, after a cautious survey of the place. "I've blundered, perhaps, in coming out here. The rascals may have sought shelter somewhere else. They may have other headquarters, where—no, by gracious! those are recent hoofprints in front of the stable. The dirt turned over by the horse's shoes is hardly dry. But there are no very recent wheel tracks, judging from—by Jove, I think I had better have a look in the stable. I'll never have a better chance."

Patsy invariably acted promptly upon a definite impulse. Stealing from the shed, he found an open space under the rear of the stable, half filled with straw and refuse, above which was a trapdoor through the floor. Crawling up amid the festoons of cobwebs, he raised it cautiously and found himself directly under a large wagon.

"There's no one here," he murmured, after listening. "That's a cinch. I'll go a step farther."

Drawing himself up through the opening, he dropped the trapdoor and crept from under the wagon. He then discovered in the dim light that it was—an undertaker's wagon.

"Gee whiz! I've struck oil, all right," he said to himself, with a thrill of satisfaction. "If the plunder is here—no, by gracious, it's gone!"

Patsy had opened the rear door and found that the wagon was empty.

Further inspection revealed that the brass name plate on each side had been skillfully altered with a coat of gilding, and that it bore a name obviously fictitious.

"By Jove, I've got a sure line on the gang, at least," thought Patsy, after these investigations. "Under the mask of death, so to put it, they have succeeded in turning this knavish trick. But where is the plunder? That's the question. I'd better sneak out and telephone to the chief, I guess, and then return and watch this place. I can direct him to it and——"

Patsy's train of thought ended abruptly.

So suddenly as to preclude any extensive move, the heavy tread of men's feet sounded on the wooden run in front of the stable, and a key was thrust into the padlock of the door.

Patsy knew that a successful retreat through the trapdoor was utterly impossible. He sought the nearest place of concealment—a corner back of a grain chest that stood under the overhang of a rear haymow. He no sooner had dropped out of sight, than the broad, sliding door was opened wide enough to admit three men.

Looking cautiously over the grain chest, Patsy immediately recognized two of them.

"Jim Margate and a well-known running mate of his, Bob Pitman, a pair of desperate blacklegs."

The third man was Mortimer Deland.

He was laughing in a cold, mirthless way, while he followed the two more roughly clad men into the stable, saying at the same time:

"Oh, I easily gave him the slip by sneaking down the servants' stairway. Fannie and Nell will make a quick get-away later. Leave that to Fan. They'll show up here during the evening. Fan will slip out from under his guns, all right."

"Do you think he knew you?" Margate asked, while all three seated themselves on some empty boxes near the partly open door.

"Know me! Sure he knew me," said Deland, still laughing icily. "I suspected what was coming when he sent up his card. The phony name did not blind me, not much!"

"By Jove, either Nick or Chick has seen and interviewed this rascal," thought Patsy, easily hearing all that was said. "This must be Deland himself, who has been posing as Gerald Vaughn."

"I sent Nell into the next room, which connects with Fan's suite, and then told the bell hop to send him up."

"Was he in disguise?"

"No, nothing doing," grinned Deland, with teeth gleaming. "He wasn't dead sure of us, you know, and he hoped we'd weaken when we saw him. He don't know us, Jim."

"You don't suppose he knew me when we lugged out the stuff this morning, do you?" questioned Margate apprehensively.

"Or me, Mort?" put in Pitman.

"The undertaker and his assistant," thought Patsy. "That was nearly a cinch before."

"Knew you!" exclaimed Deland derisively. "That's rot! How could he have known either of you through the disguise I loaned you? No, no, you're away, all right."

"That listens good to me," said Pitman. "But these Carters are infernally sharp dicks. They've got eyes like needles."

"They'd better watch out, then, lest they lose them," Deland said, more seriously, and his voice and countenance evinced a devilish streak in his nature. "I left Nick Carter a word of warning to that effect this morning. If he presses me too closely, hang him, he shall feel my teeth. He don't dream who I really am and of what I am capable."

"Any gink capable of the roof stunt you did last night can do anything," said Margate, with an approving scowl. "You're the real thing, Deland, and then some, or you couldn't have framed up such a job as this and pulled it off."

"Child's play, Jim," said Deland coldly. "A kid's stunt. Has Ruff gone after the wagon?"

"Sure. He'll come with it after dark."

"We must transfer the stuff as early as possible."

"Why early? It strikes me late would be better."

"Wagons are not out late where we are going," said Deland. "Some guy might take it into his head to watch us. No, no, Jim, the earlier the better after darkness gathers. There's no danger of our being seen in the road back of the last bedroom. It's going and coming that's risky, so the earlier the better."

"That's true, mebbe," Margate allowed. "I'm not so sure the hiding place is safe at that. If the newspapers——"

"There's nothing in the newspapers," Deland interrupted. "I've made sure of that. Besides, Ruff has had an eye on the place most of the day. He'd have reported any investigations."

"Sure, as far as that goes."

"It's as safe as a Wall Street bank vault," Deland confidently added. "Who would think of looking there for it? It beats taking the risk of coming straight here this morning, for all we afterward took a chance with the big, black wagon."

"Mebbe so," Margate again allowed. "We're banking on your judgment."

"I never went wrong in my life," said Deland. "Look me up across the water. You'll find that no blooming inspector ever put darbies on me."

"An American detective will do so," thought Patsy. "I'll bet my pile on that."

"It will be a good night for the job," Deland added, gazing out at the sky. "Cloudy and dark. What more can we ask? We'll wait here till Ruff returns with the wagon."

"That won't be long," said Pitman. "It will be dark in half an hour."

"Gee whiz! there's no get-away for me," thought Patsy, wondering where the rascals were going, though their mission was obvious. "I could not steal out unheard if I had the feet of a fly. I'll stick close to these rats, therefore, and let come what may. If they undertake to shift their plunder—well, there'll be something doing, all right. Let me get my lamps on it, and I'll hold up the whole bunch single-handed."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN GRUESOME CONFINEMENT.

What more Patsy Garvan heard was along much the same lines as that which he already had heard, but none of it gave him any clew to the contemplated destination of Deland and his confederates.

Dusk began to gather within half an hour, and darkness quickly followed. Margate lighted a small lantern, so hooding it with an empty box that its rays could not be seen from outside, but in its feeble glow the three crooks continued to sit and discuss their knavery. Their faces and figures looked grim and threatening in the dim light cast upon them.

Presently, still crouching behind the grain chest, Patsy heard the thud of hoofs and the grinding of wheels in the gravel, and Margate arose at the same time, saying quickly:

"Here comes Ruff with the wagon. I told you he'd show up promptly."

"Good enough," cried Deland. "We'll lose no time in getting away."

"I must go to the house for my cap," growled Margate.

"Go ahead. That won't take long, Jim."

"Wait till I douse this glim. There would be something doing, all right, if this dead wagon were seen here."

"It has been seen, you rascal, and I can see your finish," thought Patsy, with grim satisfaction.

He had heard the arrival of the wagon, drawn up near the front of the stable. He heard Ruff greeting Deland and Pitman, when they hastened out. He saw Margate extinguish the light, then stride out and close the door, followed by the sharp click of the padlock.

Patsy stole out from behind the grain chest in the inky darkness, then crawled under Hanlon's huge black wagon and found the iron ring in the trapdoor.

"It's the same old way for mine," he muttered, while he noiselessly opened the trap. "I'll not let these rats give me the slip. I'll find out where they are going and where they take their plunder, at least, if I get no chance to hold them up. I'll get them sooner or later, by thunder, if it takes a leg."

Indulging in these cogitations, Patsy dropped quietly through the opening, and, without waiting to close it, he crept out through the open space under the stable, and to a point between it and the old shed near by.

He then could see the wagon some ten feet away and headed toward the street. It was a large covered one, and it stood nearly opposite the space between the two buildings. The driver had not left his seat.

Pitman and Mortimer Deland already had climbed in and were seating themselves on two boxes under the leather top, that occupied by Ruff being too small for all four.

Patsy could hear them talking, and he now saw Jim Margate returning from the house.

"Gee! they may give me a long chase," he said to himself, crouching low in the darkness. "If they drive fast, I may have some difficulty in keeping up with them, or——"

He broke off abruptly, crouching lower and peering intently through the darkness.

"By Jove, the running gear of the wagon is braced

from the end of each axletree to the center pole," he added to himself. "The braces form a sort of platform under the floor of the wagon. There is room enough for me to lie on them, if I can contrive to get there. The springs will not give much under the light load to be carried. It will beat walking, by Jove, and remove the risk of losing sight of the rascals. I'll do it, by gracious, unless—"

Patsy did not stop to consider the alternative.

He saw Margate climbing into the wagon, while Ruff gathered up the reins. It was the only opportunity he would have, and well Patsy knew it, and he did not hesitate for an instant.

He darted out in the darkness and crawled quickly between the rear wheels. The voices of the four men drowned the faint sounds he could not avoid causing. Dropping flat on his back under the middle of the wagon and parallel with it, Patsy reached up and grasped the center pole with both hands, then quickly twined his legs around it.

"Get up!" growled Ruff; and the wagon started.

As quick as a flash, knowing that any jar of the wagon would be attributed to running over a rock, Patsy swung himself over the pole and wormed himself upon the braces front and rear.

He then found that he had ample room, and that he would not probably be seen by persons passed on their way, but the position was a trying one, taxing nerves and muscles to maintain it.

"I'll stick, by thunder, let come what may," he said to himself, gritting his teeth while the wagon jolted out of the driveway and into the rough road. "I'll not be shaken down while I have fingers to cling with."

It proved to be as rough a ride, nevertheless, as Patsy Garvan had ever experienced. He had to give his entire attention to retaining his position. He at no time could tell just where he was, or whither he was going. He knew only that he brought up in a lonely, somewhat wooded section, after a last mile over the roughest kind of a road, and the wagon then came to a sudden stop.

"There's no show of stealing out," thought Patsy, with every nerve and muscle strained and aching. "I must take a chance the rascals will not see me."

The four men already were climbing down from the wagon, Ruff and Jim Margate in advance. The latter scarce had alighted on the ground, when Patsy heard him ask, with a fierce growl:

"What the devil's that?"

"What?" snapped Deland, joining him.

"That white thing under the wagon. It looks like a handkerchief."

A handkerchief it was, as a matter of fact, jolted from Patsy's pocket just at that fatal moment when the wagon stopped, and fallen to the ground to betray him.

"Gee! it's all off, and I'm caught, dead sure," flashed through his mind. "I can't even pull a gun."

Deland had crouched quickly to get the handkerchief, and his gaze fell upon Patsy. His eyes took on a quick, fiery glow. With invariable coolness, nevertheless, he whipped out a revolver and said sharply:

"Not only a handkerchief, Jim, but also its owner."

"What d'ye mean?" Margate snarled.

"See for yourself," snapped Deland. "Don't stir till I give you permission, you spying whelp, or there'll be holes made in you."

"Oh, I'm not going to stir," Patsy said coolly, thoroughly disgusted with the unfortunate turn of affairs. "I'm not dead sure that I can stir, as far as that goes."

"You'll be dead if you do, take my word for it. Drop down on the ground."

Patsy obeyed, falling with a thud when he let go of his support. He could not have clung on much longer.

"Get him by the legs, Jim, and pull him out," Deland commanded. "Watch that he don't reach for a gun."

"If he does, blast him, I'll break his head," Margate snarled, while he and Pitman seized Patsy's heels and dragged him from under the wagon.

"Bring a piece of rope, Ruff," said Deland, with revolver ready. "Stand him on his feet, Jim. Do you know him?"

Patsy saw that resistance would be nothing less than madness. He suffered the two ruffians to yank him to his feet, and when they did so his disguise was jostled out of place.

Margate saw it and jerked it from his face.

"Perdition!" He recoiled with a gasp. "It's young Garvan, one of Nick Carter's push."

Deland came nearer, till the muzzle of his revolver touched Patsy's breast. He did not appear to be in the least disturbed by the discovery, not more than when Chick intruded upon him that morning. His nerves were, apparently, as stiff as steel.

"Oh, is that so?" he inquired icily. "Are you sure of it, Jim?"

"I ought to be, hang him."

"We'll do better than hang him," said Deland, with an ominous gleam in his cold eyes. "Garvan, eh? What sent you out here?"

"I came to see what you rascals were after," said Patsy curtly.

"Did you?" sneered Deland. "Well, you shall not be disappointed. You shall see all that we do—until we depart."

"That's good enough for me."

"But after then—you will see nothing!" Deland added, with a merciless smile.

Patsy did not deign to reply.

He glanced sharply around, however, and saw that they were close to the rear part of an extensive cemetery. A fence of wooden palings divided it from the rough, lonely back road. The white stones and monuments, also several large tombs built into the side of a hill, could be seen through the semidarkness.

"Get his weapons and bind his arms securely," Deland commanded coldly. "If he has any handcuffs, fasten them on him, also. He shall watch us to his heart's content—until we leave him."

"Leave him where?" growled Margate.

"Wait and see."

Patsy still was a bit puzzled, but he submitted in grim silence to the work of the three ruffians, who disarmed and then securely bound him.

"Now, Margate, a gag," said Deland. "Make sure that you fix it so securely that he cannot remove it. He shall occupy cold quarters to-night—and hereafter!"

Patsy saw plainly that he was in the hands of a man who had in him all the makings of a devil.

Margate took a gag from his pocket and fastened it in Patsy's mouth.

"Now, gentlemen, we are ready," said Deland. "Bring

him with us. Let him see what he may. It's a pleasure to gratify him. Murderers are well fed and wined, even, if wanted, before their execution. Bring him along."

He turned with the last and tore off several palings, already loosened, from the high fence.

Forced on by the other three ruffians, Patsy was conducted to the door of one of the tombs, some twenty yards from where the wagon had been left.

Deland took a key from his pocket and unlocked the iron door, which Pitman and Ruff quickly removed and stood against a near bank.

"Look!" said Deland. "Here is what we came after."

He shot the beam of an electric lamp into the tomb.

Patsy looked and saw—the long, wooden case and the florist's boxes seen in the undertaker's wagon that morning.

He could not speak, but he glared at the smiling miscreant near by, and Deland laughed audibly.

"A safe concealment, Garvan," he remarked. "Even your famous Nick Carter will never think of this. Nor will you ever inform him. For, after removing the plunder for which we had labored—I shall leave you here!"

Patsy felt a chill run down his spine, and a cold perspiration broke out all over him.

"You will not be found," Deland added, with merciless deliberation. "There may be no occasion to reopen this tomb for years. Nor can you escape, or make yourself heard, for we shall bind your feet and leave you in the box now containing part of our booty. Move lively, mates! The sooner we are away, now, the better."

"Gee! here's a fine outlook," thought Patsy, steadying his nerves. "This miscreant means what he said. Nor will either of these rascals oppose him. Great guns! it looks tough, for fair!"

The three ruffians, Deland watching, already were transferring the pasteboard boxes to the wagon, a task that occupied them only a few minutes.

The cover then was removed from the undertaker's box, which stood on the floor of the tomb.

Patsy could only stand and gaze.

When he returned with his companions for the last time, Margate brought a screw driver from the wagon.

"Off with the cover, Jim," said Deland coldly. "Save the screws so that we may fasten it on again—with this meddlesome feller under it. I will teach him to interfere with my business, already sufficiently hazardous. Make haste. Put the stuff out here on the ground. We four then can take it to the wagon, after locking the tomb door."

The knaves were at work while he was speaking.

Patsy saw small but costly old paintings, boxes of gems and jade, the priceless Strad violin, then in its case—these and many other treasures Patsy saw brought out and laid upon the ground.

There was no delay over what followed, no argument about it, no sign of mercy in the eyes of either of his captors.

Patsy was rudely thrown to the ground and his legs securely bound.

Half a minute later he was lying in the box from which the treasures had been taken.

He heard the cover replaced, the massive key turned in the grating lock.

Three minutes later the wagon moved away with the four knaves and its load of treasures.

Only Patsy Garvan remained.

Entombed alive!

Alone with the dead!

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

It fell to the lot of Nick Carter, as frequently occurred, to be a sort of connecting link between his two assistants, so uniting the result of their work as to form the complete and unbreakable chain that helplessly shackled the outlaws they were seeking.

It was after six o'clock when Nick, returning to his Madison Avenue residence, learned that neither of them had arrived, nor any definite message been received concerning their movements.

"Both men have picked up a trail worth following, and are so engaged, or they would have sent in a report of some kind," Nick reasoned, taking the swivel chair at his desk. "They must have accomplished more than I, in that case, since I was banking quite heavily on what I could learn from Archer, the real-estate agent, concerning his relations with Deland. It was bad luck, indeed, that he was out of town on this particular day. I'll try his residence. He may have returned by this time."

Nick had been trying in vain, in fact, to get in communication with Mr. John Archer, who had had charge of the Barker residence during its owner's absence. He now found, with much satisfaction, that he had met with success.

The servant who answered his telephone call informed him that Mr. Archer had arrived home and would talk with him in a moment. Scarce more than that had elapsed when Nick heard the agent's voice over the wire.

He at once informed him of what had occurred in the Barker residence, and he then began to question him. He soon found, however, that Archer could add but little to what already had been learned; that he had permitted Deland to occupy the house because of a letter containing those instructions from its owner, brought to him by Deland, and that he had not communicated with Colonel Barker in regard to it, believing the letter to be genuine and Deland entirely trustworthy.

"Did you recognize Colonel Barker's writing, or is the letter typewritten?" Nick inquired.

"It is typewritten on paper bearing a cut of the Berlin hotel in which Colonel Barker is living," was the reply.

"Did you recognize the signature?"

"Perfectly, Mr. Carter."

"It is a forgery, nevertheless."

"That seems almost incredible," Archer protested. "I am very familiar with Colonel Barker's signature. I have had charge of both of his places at times during many years."

"Has he two places?"

"Yes."

"Where is the other?"

"It's the old homestead, out Fordham way," said Archer. "Colonel Barker grew up there and still spends part of each summer on the old place. It is outside of the town and somewhat isolated. Nearly all of his family are entombed in the old cemetery in that section."

"Has Deland, or Vaughn, ever been out there?" Nick inquired.

"I think not, though we have talked of the place. There is nothing more I can tell you."

"I wish to see that forged letter," said Nick. "I will call at your Broadway office to-morrow morning."

"Very well."

"I then will go with you to the Barker residence."

Nick's face wore a frown when he hung up the receiver. He was thinking, not of what he had just heard, but of the stolen Strickland treasures.

"The rascals may have taken them to that old homestead," he muttered, gazing intently at his desk. "Still, there would have been that same danger that the undertaker's wagon would be seen. The only really consistent place to which they could have driven it is a graveyard. But that, on the other hand, in view of its contents, seems utterly absurd and——"

Nick stopped short. His eyes suddenly lighted. He was hit with an idea that had not occurred to him before.

"Entombed out there!" he muttered. "A tomb! By Jove, that may call the turn."

Nick seized the telephone again and got the Fordham telephone exchange. He learned after a few inquiries just where the old Barker place was located, and that the sexton of the cemetery mentioned was one Jason Dexter.

"He has a telephone in his house," said the operator. "I will connect you with him."

"Do so, please," Nick directed, then waited until he heard the sexton's voice.

"Hello!"

"Is that you, Mr. Dexter?"

"Yes."

"This is Mr. Vaughn talking—Gerald Vaughn," said Nick, proceeding in a roundabout way to get the information he wanted.

"Oh, yes, I remember you," Dexter returned. "What can I do for you?"

"Nothing whatever. I merely want to thank you again for having opened the Barker tomb for me this morning, and for your kind attentions."

"Well, well, that is quite needless, Mr. Vaughn, I assure you. My duties require no less of me."

"I wanted to thank you again, nevertheless, and I feel very grateful. Good night, sir."

Nick did not wait for an answer. He hung up the receiver, shouted to Joseph, the butler, and then hastened to don a woolen cap and a thick reefer, into the pockets of which he thrust three revolvers.

"Have Danny here with the touring car as soon as possible," he commanded, when Joseph appeared at the office door.

The touring car, with Danny Maloney at the wheel, was at the curbing outside five minutes later.

Thirty minutes later it stood in front of the small wooden dwelling in which Jason Dexter resided, a few hundred yards from the old rural cemetery of which he had charge. One of the front rooms was lighted, denoting that the sexton still was at home.

"Put out the headlights, Danny," Nick directed, while he sprang from the car. "There is no danger of a collision in this lonely section. The rascals might see our lights in front of this house, however, if they were to arrive to transfer their hidden booty. We'll take a back road, which I happen to know flanks the farther side of the cemetery."

"Out they go, chief," returned Danny, the glare of the lamps on the lonely road suddenly vanishing.

Nick entered the front yard of the house and rang the bell. It was answered by the sexton himself, a somewhat bowed, gray man well into the sixties.

It goes without saying, of course, that he was more than surprised when Nick entered and introduced himself, telling him what had occurred and what he suspected.

It then appeared that Deland had called on the sexton two days before, stating that he was a relative of Colonel Barker and then was occupying his Fifth Avenue residence. He further stated that his aunt had died suddenly that morning, and that he wanted to place her remains in the Barker tomb for a few days, until arrangements could be made to take her body to Virginia, her native State, for burial.

"You suspected nothing wrong, I infer," said Nick.

"Certainly not, Mr. Carter. Mr. Vaughn appeared to be a perfect gentleman," Dexter assured him, with rather rustic simplicity. "I consented, of course, supposing he had a family right to use the tomb. I told him Colonel Barker had a duplicate key, but he said he did not know where to find it. Colonel Barker is abroad, you know."

"Yes, I know that."

"I then told Mr. Vaughn that I would open the tomb for him with my key when he came with the body. He said that was just what he wanted, and I did so quite early this morning. I do remember, now, that he would not permit me to aid the undertaker and his assistant in handling the casket and boxes of flowers, all of which were put in the tomb."

"You now know why, of course," Nick said, a bit dryly. "You would have detected that the boxes did not contain flowers. Let me see your key to the tomb."

The sexton hastened to get it, and Nick examined it with his lens.

"Just as I suspected," he exclaimed, almost immediately. "An impression was taken of this key while you were at the tomb. It was taken in putty, or some ingredient containing oil. There are traces of it on one side of the key."

"Well, well, this is most amazing."

"Get your hat, Mr. Dexter, and show me where the tomb is located," Nick said abruptly. "I have an assistant outside. The crooks undoubtedly will come to-night to remove their plunder. We can catch them in the act, and—well, that will be their finish."

It did not take them long, all three, to arrive at the door of the Barker tomb, nor long for the sexton to unlock and remove the iron door.

Nick shot the beam of his search lamp into its gruesome depths.

"Great Scott!" cried Danny impulsively. "The treasures are gone, chief."

"Not all of them," said Nick, mystified for a moment. "Here is the box which must have contained some of them. Unless empty, it——"

Danny uttered a shriek, and Nick recoiled involuntarily.

A groan from within the box had fallen with startling effect on the ears of all. Then came a fierce kicking against the top of it.

"By gracious!" cried Nick, quick to guess the truth. "The rascals have been and gone. But they have entombed either Chick or Patsy."

He sprang into the tomb, shouting quickly and thumping on the long box:

"Keep cool! We'll have you out in half a minute."

It was done in less time, in fact. For Nick found that he could thrust his fingers under one corner of the cover, and, with the strength of a giant, he tore it off in an instant.

Patsy Garvan sat up in the box, in the glare of Nick's searchlight, with his face wearing a look of relief that words could not possibly describe.

"By Heaven!" Nick muttered. "Those curs shall pay dearly for this."

"Gee! that was some glad sound, chief, when I heard your voice," said Patsy, after he had been liberated and the tomb relocked. "The rascals got me—but now we'll get them."

"Tell me what occurred," said Nick.

Patsy informed him with half a dozen breaths, adding quickly:

"They have been gone less than ten minutes. They are returning to Margate's place. We can reach there by the other road and without being seen long before they arrive."

"Come on, then," said Nick. "That's the proper move."

Their run to the Margate place was made in twelve minutes. The car, with lights extinguished, was concealed in a near, vacant lot. Returning to the front of the old house to watch for the wagon, the three detectives scarce had concealed themselves under a low wall, when a taxicab put in an appearance and stopped in front of the house.

"Some of the gang, Patsy," Nick murmured. "Follow me and we'll take them in at once."

He strode out just as the chauffeur sprang down from his seat to aid two women to alight.

"Stop a moment, chauffeur," said Nick, reaching for his revolver. "Who are your passengers and where did you——"

The chauffeur burst out laughing.

"Thundering guns!" he cried, removing his disguise. "Is it you, Nick?"

The chauffeur was Chick Carter, in the coat, hat, and goggles of Mullen, with whom Chick had easily planned the subterfuge before the coming down of the two much-wanted women in suite 710.

Five minutes later, Nell Margate and Fannie Coyle were in irons and locked in a closet in the house, pending the arrival of the male members of the gang.

When that occurred, some twenty minutes later, and the four crooks alighted from the wagon containing the stolen treasures, four detectives stepped into the driveway and confronted each, with a revolver ready, if needed.

It was not needed, however, for the arrest was easily and quickly made.

Ten o'clock that evening saw every culprit locked in the Tombs, the first step toward the punishment awaiting them.

It appeared later that Nell Margate had discovered the feasibility of the robbery, that she had communicated with Fannie Coyle, then in London, and that the latter then had rung Deland into the job, the latter going to Berlin and cultivating the acquaintance of Colonel Barker, and successfully laying his plans, as have appeared.

They were as successfully perverted by Nick Carter and his assistants, and the gratitude and joy of Mr. Rudolph Strickland, when he saw his cherished treasures being returned to his house, as Nick had promised, may be far more easily imagined than described.

It was a fixed habit of Nick Carter, however—that of keeping a promise.

THE END.

"The Gordon Elopement; or, Nick Carter's Three of a Kind," will be the title of the long, complete story which you will find in the next issue, No. 155, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out August 28th. In this story you will read of the further adventures of the famous detective with Mortimer Deland, the international crook. Then, too, you will also find an installment of the serial now running in this publication, together with several other interesting articles.

SNAPSHOT ARTILLERY.

By BERTRAM LEBHAR.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 153 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER IV.

HAWLEY'S CONTRIBUTION.

"Thanks, old man," said the Camera Chap to Carroll, as the boy went off to deliver this message. "But I hope this defiance of the police won't get you into any trouble?"

"I think not," the editor replied. "You haven't committed a murder, or any crime of a serious nature, have you?"

"No, indeed," Hawley assured him. "All I did was to take a snapshot. But I wasn't referring to trouble with the authorities. What I meant was that I hope this won't get you in bad with the owner of this paper. The chief of police doesn't happen to be a friend of his, does he?"

"No," replied Carroll grimly. "I assure you that fat bully of a chief is far from being a friend of mine."

"But I said the owner of the paper," Hawley protested.

Carroll grinned. "My dear Hawley, the owner of the Oldham *Daily Bulletin* sits before you now."

The Camera Chap stared at him in astonishment. "You?" he cried half incredulously.

"Exactly," chuckled Carroll. "I suppose it looks queer to you to see the proprietor of the sheet holding down the job of city editor, but I am only filling this chair during the absence of its regular occupant. My city editor is laid up with an attack of inflammatory rheumatism, so I undertook to do his work."

Still Hawley appeared incredulous. Two years before, Fred Carroll had been earning thirty dollars a week as a reporter on the New York *Sentinel*, and the Camera Chap recalled that he had always been notoriously hard up in those days. Where on earth could he have got hold of enough money to buy a newspaper?

As though reading his thoughts, Carroll said, with a laugh: "I suppose you're wondering how I managed to raise the necessary dough to acquire this progressive, aggressive, and fearlessly independent sheet? No need to tell you that I didn't save it out of the measly wages the *Sentinel* paid me. The fact is, Hawley, I came into a lit-

tle change after I got fired from the *Sentinel* for getting them into that confounded libel suit. A wealthy relative of mine over in England cashed in his chips, and mentioned me in his will to the extent of fifteen thousand. I was tipped off that this paper was on the market, and could be had at that figure, so I came here and bought it. There's the whole story in a nutshell—or pretty near the whole story."

Hawley doubted no longer. He could see now that Carroll wasn't joking, and he had never known him to be guilty of falsehood.

"I'm tickled to death to hear this good news, old chap," he said, grabbing his friend's hand enthusiastically. "Let me offer you my congratulations, even though they're tardy. You certainly are a lucky fellow."

A wry smile came to Carroll's face. "Not quite as lucky as you imagine," he said grimly. "Better take back your congratulations, Hawley. It is true that I'm the owner of a newspaper now, but—you're likely to meet me on Park Row hunting for a job in the very near future."

"Why, what's the matter?" the Camera Chap inquired solicitously. "You don't mean to say that the paper isn't a success, old man?"

Carroll shrugged his broad shoulders. "When I tell you that I had to hock my watch yesterday in order to pay my board bill, you will doubtless gather that the Oldham *Daily Bulletin* isn't exactly a gold mine," he replied dryly.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed Hawley. "And I always had an idea that newspaper owners were bloated plutocrats."

"Some are," was the grim reply. "But I guess I'm far from being the only New York newspaper man who has tried to run a small-town daily and made a fizzle of it."

"What seems to be the main trouble?" the Camera Chap inquired. "I should think that a paper with a motto like yours was bound to be a winner. 'Progressive, aggressive, and fearlessly independent'—that's a mighty fine catch line, Fred. The population of Oldham certainly ought to rally to the support of a sheet which has such an attractive policy."

The owner of the *Bulletin* shook his head. "Yes, they ought to—but they don't. The fact is, Hawley, that, from the standpoint of dollars and cents, being aggressive and fearlessly independent in a town like this doesn't pay. The first thing I did after acquiring control of the *Bulletin*," he went on, with a frown, "was to declare war against the city government. From a financial standpoint, that was a disastrous mistake."

"Why did you do it?" the Camera Chap inquired.

"Because," replied Carroll, his frown deepening, "I simply couldn't stand for the methods of the gang which is running things in this town. They're the rawest, nerviest, crookedest bunch of grafters that ever had control of a city government. Compared to them, New York's old Tweed ring was a bunch of angels. I made up my mind that the *Bulletin* was going to sweep them out of office. I announced that intention in an editorial on my front page the very first day the sheet appeared under my management."

"That sounds interesting," exclaimed Hawley, an appreciative flash in his blue eyes. "What was the result?"

Carroll laughed grimly. "The result was that I lost pretty nearly all my advertising. It seems that most of the big advertisers of this town are allied in one way or another with that bunch of grafters at the city hall. I didn't know this when I started out to fight the administration. Although, even if I had known it, it wouldn't have made any difference," he added, his strong under jaw thrust forward aggressively. "I should have gone ahead just the same, of course."

"Bully for you, old man!" exclaimed the Camera Chap. "So those lobsters tried to put you out of business by withdrawing their advertising, eh?"

"Yes; and that wasn't all. That gang of grafters started in to retaliate by using the powers of the city government against the *Bulletin*. They stayed up nights thinking of ways to harass me. The police department, the fire department, and all the other departments have received orders to refuse to give the *Bulletin* reporters any news. The police arrest the drivers of my delivery wagons on all sorts of trumped-up charges whenever they get the chance. The gas, water, and electricity department is always finding fault with conditions in the Bulletin Building. These are only a few of the dirty tricks those rascals have resorted to in their efforts to put me out of business."

"And you've been fighting back all the time, of course?" inquired Hawley anxiously.

Carroll looked at him reproachfully. "I thought you knew me too well to ask such a superfluous question," he said in a hurt tone. "Of course, I've been hammering at them just as hard as I know how, and intend to keep it up while there's breath left in the *Bulletin*."

"But I'm afraid it's a losing fight," he went on sadly. "I don't mind admitting to you, old man, that they've got me groggy. Without any advertising worth speaking of, and with my sources of news crippled, it looks as if the days of the *Bulletin* were numbered, and its finish already in sight."

"How about your circulation?" the Camera Chap inquired. "Surely that must have gained? You don't mean to say that the people haven't supported you in this laudable fight?"

Carroll shrugged his shoulders. "Not so that you could notice it. It is true that at first my campaign against the grafters got us a lot of new readers. But the circulation figures soon dwindled. The population of Oldham seemed to lose interest in the fight. Besides, I was discredited at the start."

"Discredited! How?" the Camera Chap demanded in astonishment.

The proprietor of the *Bulletin* smiled grimly. "There's a rival sheet here—the *Chronicle*. It is the administration organ—which means, of course, that its proprietor is hand and glove with that gang of crooks at the city hall. The *Chronicle* happened to learn that I was formerly a reporter on the New York *Sentinel*, and that I was discharged from that paper for getting it into a libel suit. That information was pie to those crooks. The *Chronicle* published it on its front page in red type. It gave all the details of that unfortunate libel suit, insinuated that I had been forced to come to Oldham because no New York newspaper would hire me after my discharge from the *Sentinel*, and warned the public not to pay any attention to my 'base and slanderous attacks upon the virtuous and public-spirited gentlemen who were giving Oldham the best government it had ever enjoyed.' Of course, this has hurt me a lot. The *Chronicle* keeps it

prominently displayed on its front page every day, and, as I have said, I am pretty much discredited."

"That was a dirty trick," declared Hawley indignantly. "Who is the proprietor of the *Chronicle*?"

"A lean old fox named Gale."

"Gale!" the Camera Chap repeated, with an inflection of astonishment. "That's a queer coincidence. Doesn't happen to be any relative of the reporter by the same name on the staff of the New York *Daily News*, does he, Fred?"

Carroll grinned. "Yes, Hawley, the proprietor of the Oldham *Chronicle* is the father of your old enemy, Gale, of the *News*. I can assure you, he's a chip of the young block, too—several chips, in fact."

The Camera Chap frowned. "I recall now that somebody once told me that Gale's father was the proprietor of a small paper," he said. "I guess, Fred, it was the younger Gale who supplied the Oldham *Chronicle* with the information about that unfortunate libel suit of yours."

"I haven't the slightest doubt of that," Carroll answered. "He and I never did get along together when I was on Park Row. In fact, I had occasion to punch his head only a few days before I got fired from the *Sentinel*. I guess he was tickled to death to have a chance to get back at me."

Their conversation was interrupted at this point by a young man whose face wore a depressed, anxious expression as he stepped up to the editorial desk.

"Mr. Carroll," he said gloomily, "I'm sorry to have to tell you that we're going to be badly scooped in the next issue."

"How so, Parsons?" the acting city editor demanded sharply.

"There's been a big burglary in town," announced Parsons, who was the *Bulletin's* police reporter.

"A burglary—where?" Carroll demanded.

"That's what I can't find out, sir. I overheard two detectives talking about it together at headquarters early this morning, but as soon as they caught sight of me they dropped the subject in a hurry. I've been scurrying around town all morning in the hope of finding somebody who could tell me who was robbed, but I haven't been able to pick up anything. I tried to get an interview with Chief Hodgins, but he refused, as usual, to talk to a *Bulletin* man."

"Humph!" Carroll grunted. "And you think the *Chronicle* has the yarn, Parsons?"

"I am quite sure they have, sir," was the mournful reply. "One of the detectives admitted to me that Burns, the *Chronicle's* police reporter, had all the details, and a long interview with Chief Hodgins. I'm awfully sorry, sir. I hope you don't blame me for falling down on the yarn."

Carroll got up and placed his hand on his reporter's shoulder. "No, I don't blame you at all, old chap. Considering the difficulties under which you are working, I can't reasonably hold it against you if you get scooped occasionally on a police story. Keep pegging away, and don't get discouraged. Better spend the rest of the day trying to get a line on this burglary yarn. You may be fortunate enough to run into somebody who can give you some information about it. If not—well, I guess we'll have to grin and bear it."

A chuckle from the Camera Chap caused him to turn to that young man in indignant astonishment.

"What's the matter with you?" Carroll demanded irritably. "I don't see anything to be amused about."

"Don't you?" rejoined Hawley, with a grin, taking a plate holder from his camera and laying it on the desk. "I think you'll be amused, too, Fred, when I tell you what I've got here. Would you mind handing me a pad and pencil?"

"What are you going to do?" Carroll demanded wonderingly, as he handed over the desired writing implements.

"I'm going to write a heading for the burglary story which will appear on the front page of the *Bulletin's* next issue," the Camera Chap replied.

"But we haven't got the burglary story?" Carroll protested, with a puzzled frown.

"Pardon me, but I have. It's here in this plate holder," declared Hawley. "I don't mean to say that we've got the details of the larceny—but we've got something just as good—or better. Wait until I've written my heading, and I'll explain."

He wrote rapidly on the pad, and handed the result to Carroll.

"Writing headings is a little out of my line," he remarked; "but I think this will about do."

Carroll stared wonderingly at these words.

"There Was a Burglary in Town Yesterday, and Here's the Reason Why."

"Underneath that heading," the Camera Chap explained, in response to Carroll's inquiring stare, "will go the snapshot which I took at police headquarters a few minutes ago. It's a picture of Oldham's chief of police, fast asleep at his desk."

CHAPTER V.

A TELLING SHOT.

Chief of Police Hodgins let out a bellow of rage the next morning when his startled gaze rested upon the front page of the Oldham *Daily Bulletin*.

The editor of that belligerent sheet had eagerly availed himself of Hawley's snapshots and the latter's suggestion as to how to use them. Both negatives had turned out excellently, and, although there wasn't a great deal of difference between the two poses, Carroll decided to use them both, so as to make as big a showing as possible. They appeared side by side at the top of the page, and above them, stretched across the full width of the page, was the heading which the Camera Chap had composed.

Beneath the cuts was an editorial from the pen of Fred Carroll, written in very short sentences, and with many words capitalized—a style of editorial which he had copied from the New York *Sentinel*. The first paragraphs were as follows:

"The above genuine snapshots tell their own story. They were taken at police headquarters at two o'clock yesterday afternoon. They show our chief of police in a thoroughly characteristic pose. A brief study of these interesting and genuine photographs will enable the reader to understand why CRIMINALS regard Oldham as their HAPPY HUNTING GROUND.

"Most police officials believe in keeping their eyes open and their mouths closed while on duty. Our chief of police reverses that old-fashioned policy. As these snapshots show, he does HIS police duty with his eyes CLOSED and his mouth WIDE OPEN. Citizens and property

owners may not approve of this original policy, but, no doubt, BURGLARS, STRONG-ARM MEN, and other CROOKS heartily indorse it. Of course, they are thoroughly satisfied with our SOMNOLENT chief of police.

"Night before last there was a daring burglary, committed in this town. Bold thieves got away with plunder worth many thousand dollars. We frankly confess that the *Bulletin* is not, as yet, in possession of the full details of that burglary. We tried to find out about the crime, but were unsuccessful. When a *Bulletin* representative called on Chief Hodgins, to ascertain the particulars, he found him SNORING. The *Bulletin* representative was too polite to disturb the chief's daylight slumbers, so, instead of interviewing him, he took his picture. That could be done without WAKING him. Besides, our representative thought that the taxpayers of Oldham would find these snapshots much more interesting and illuminating than a mere detailed account of the burglary."

There were several more paragraphs couched in the same strain. Chief Hodgins read it through to the very end. Then, in a paroxysm of fury, he tore the paper in small pieces, growling, as he did so, like a terrier worrying a rat.

"I'd give a whole lot to have that camera feller here right now," he muttered. "Confound these fools for letting him get away! They're a lot of boneheads!"

This criticism of his subordinates was scarcely just, in view of the fact that the chief himself had led the squad of police which laid in wait for Hawley outside the Bulletin Building with the intention of placing that young man under arrest as soon as he stepped out of the newspaper office. Not having a warrant, they had not dared to force their way into the editorial rooms, so the chief and his men had stationed themselves outside, confident that sooner or later the Camera Chap must come out and fall into their clutches.

But Carroll, suspecting this ambush, showed Hawley how to make his escape by means of a window at the rear of the building, and the Camera Chap was on his motor cycle, dashing up the steep road which led to his host's mountain retreat, long before the police became aware of the fact that they had been outwitted.

Chief Hodgins was, of course, as much to blame as any of his men for this fiasco; but as it was some relief to his feelings to abuse his subordinates for their "gross carelessness," he did not hesitate to do so. The chief's bump of logic and his sense of fairness were so underdeveloped that they were almost minute quantities.

Just as he got through with his performance of savagely rending the offending copy of the *Bulletin* into small pieces, the telephone on his desk rang. It was the voice of the mayor which came to him over the wire. The mayor's name was Martin Henkle. He was a big, burly man, whose voice when he was angry was so gruff that in comparison Chief Hodgins' manner of speech was sweetly melodious. By that token, his honor was exceedingly peeved now.

"Is that you, Hodgins?" he growled over the wire.

"Yes, Mr. Mayor," was the meek reply.

The head of the police department had turned very pale. Mayor Henkle's wife was his second cousin, but in spite of this relationship he stood in great fear of his honor.

"Huh! Seen this morning's *Bulletin* yet?" the latter inquired hoarsely.

"Yes, sir, I have," replied the chief, glaring at the fragments of paper on the floor. "And of all the dastardly outrages that ever——"

"A fine spectacle you've made of yourself!" came the snarling interruption. "You big, fat-headed boob, I gave you credit for possessing a little more sense, or I'd never have appointed you. The whole town is laughing over those pictures. Everybody I met this morning on my way to the city hall was reading the *Bulletin*. You've made a laughingstock of my administration."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Mayor," said Hodgins humbly. "The fact is, that rascally photographer took an unfair advantage of me. I wasn't really asleep, of course. I had—er—just closed my eyes for a minute, thinking out a scheme for catching those burglars—I always sit with my eyes closed, you know, when I'm thinking—and before I knew what was happening, that fellow sneaked in and took those snapshots."

The chief had invented this explanation on the spur of the moment. It sounded so good to him that he was just congratulating himself upon his ingenuity when a snort of contempt from the other end of the wire filled him with consternation.

"That won't do," growled the mayor. "You'll have to think up a better one than that, Hodgins, if you want to get away with it. Anybody with a grain of common sense can tell from those pictures that you were fast asleep. Men who think with their eyes closed don't open their mouths, too. Besides, that fellow took two pictures. You must have been in a mighty sound sleep, or you'd have heard him come into the room and nabbed him before he had a chance to take the second."

"Well, perhaps I dozed off a little, Mr. Mayor," the disconcerted policeman admitted. "I'll not deny it. You see, I hadn't had much sleep the night before, and I haven't been feeling very well lately. After all, I guess it ain't such a terrible crime for a hard-working public official to take a short nap in his private office."

"You should have locked your office door, you big, blundering baboon!" snarled the mayor. "I'm not kicking so much at your falling asleep at your desk as I am at your permitting the *Bulletin* to catch you napping. The whole town is grinning at you, and, of course, I—being responsible for your appointment—have got to bear the brunt of it. I don't mind being roasted, but I can't stand being laughed at.

"And, what's more, I don't intend to stand for it!" the mayor went on, a menace in his tone. "I tell you, Hodgins, you've got to square yourself with the public regarding those pictures if you want to keep your job. I don't see how you're going to do it—there's no denying the evidence of the camera—but unless you can swing public sentiment your way, I'll be compelled to remove you from office. So you'd better get busy."

The chief of police started to protest, but found himself addressing a "dead" wire. The mayor, after delivering this ultimatum, had abruptly disconnected.

For several minutes Chief Hodgins paced the floor of his private office, a scowl upon his round, fat face.

"Wish I had that Camera Chap here right now," he muttered. "I'd twist his confounded neck. Square myself with the public! How am I going to do that?"

Then suddenly his face lighted up. "Guess I'll go and

have a talk with my friend Gale, of the *Chronicle*," he mused. "He ought to be able to help me out of this trouble. When it comes to clever tricks, there ain't an editor in the country is equal to that chap. Ten to one he'll be able to dope out a way to turn the tables on that miserable rag of a *Bulletin*."

CHAPTER VI.

GALE SUGGESTS.

As Chief Hodgins walked down Main Street toward the *Chronicle* office, he became painfully aware that there was a broad grin upon the face of nearly every person he met.

Many of the amused persons had copies of the *Bulletin* in their hands or protruding from their coat pockets; so that, although he was not a particularly sensitive man, he was forced to conclude that they were smiling at his expense.

Several small boys followed him at a discreet distance, giggling and jeering. One street urchin, more bold than the rest, came up close behind him, and gave a graphic imitation of a man snoring. With a snarl of rage, the head of the Oldham police force wheeled around, with the intention of making a terrible example of this juvenile tormentor, but the youngster darted beyond his reach. The chief started to give chase, but soon abandoned the idea. He was too fat to be much of a sprinter.

Fortunately the Chronicle Building was not far from police headquarters, so these painful experiences soon came to an end. Delancey Gale, editor and publisher of the Oldham *Chronicle*, greeted Chief Hodgins cordially when the latter stepped into his private office.

"My dear chief, this is, indeed, a pleasure," he cried effusively. "Pray sit down and make yourself comfortable."

Mr. Gale was a dapper little old man, with neatly trimmed white mutton-chop whiskers, and a very prominent Adam's apple. There was something about his leany, sharp-featured countenance which made one think of a fox, although just in what respect he bore a physical resemblance to that animal it would have been difficult to point out.

As Chief Hodgins sank into a chair, he became aware of the fact that he and the editor were not the only occupants of the room. A good-looking young man whose clothes were of the very latest cut stood near the window, with his profile toward the policeman.

"You've met my son, of course, chief?" said the editor and publisher of the *Chronicle*.

"Sure!" replied Hodgins, with a gracious nod to the young man. "But I declare I shouldn't have known him. He's changed a whole lot since I saw him last. That was more'n ten years ago, I guess. Doin' newspaper work in New York, ain't you, sir?"

"He has been," replied the elder Gale, with a proud look in the direction of the young man. "For several years, chief, my son has been a distinguished member of the staff of the New York *Daily News*. But he has resigned that position to come out here and help me run the *Chronicle*."

"A very sensible idea," said Hodgins. "But now, Mr. Gale, to get down to my business. I'm a little rushed for time, so you'll excuse me for bein' brief. Have you—ahem!—seen to-day's issue of the *Bulletin*?"

"Of course," replied the elder Gale, with a deprecating smile. "I presume you are referring to those disgraceful pictures? They are an outrage!"

"They certainly are that," growled Hodgins. "What would you advise me to do about them, Mr. Gale—to set myself right in the eyes of the public, I mean?"

Again Mr. Gale smiled deprecatingly. "I scarcely think there is any need to worry about that, chief. It isn't likely that the public will pay any attention to anything that appears in our disreputable contemporary, the *Bulletin*."

"They wouldn't if they had any sense," said the chief, scowling as he recalled his recent painful experience on the street. "But—ahem!—the public seems inclined to pay more attention to those confounded snapshots than you'd think, and I've got to do something to set myself right. That's what I've come to see you about, Mr. Gale."

"I guess that can be easily fixed," said the editor. "I'll run an editorial on the front page of to-morrow's *Chronicle*, denouncing the *Bulletin* for publishing those pictures. I shall refer to it as a pictorial outrage against decency and a disgrace to journalism."

"That's what it is, all right," muttered the chief, with an approving nod; "but will the public look at it that way?"

"They will when they read in to-morrow's *Chronicle* why it was that you were asleep at your desk," replied the editor, with a sly smile. "We'll explain that our worthy chief of police, after being up all night for three successive nights in the pursuit of his official duties, was so tired out that he was unable to keep up any longer. Tired nature asserted itself, and he fell back in his chair in a state of collapse. And while he was in this condition—brought about solely by his devotion to duty and zeal to serve the public—the miscreant photographer of the *Bulletin* sneaked in and made capital of the incident.

"I rather think that will do the trick, chief," the elder Gale remarked. "When they read the *Chronicle* to-morrow morning, the people of Oldham, instead of smiling at those pictures, will look upon you as a martyr."

Chief Hodgins' face lighted up. "The very thing!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "It looks to me as if you'd hit the right idea, Mr. Gale, and I don't mind telling you that if you print all that you'll come pretty near telling the truth, too."

"Have you caught the fellow who took the pictures yet, chief?" the editor inquired.

"No; the rascal got away," Hodgins answered, with a scowl. "My men learned that he got out of town on a motor cycle, but they can't find out where he's gone. I guess he won't dare set foot in this town again. He was certainly the nerviest camera fiend I've seen or heard of."

The younger Gale pricked up his ears at these words. "Don't happen to know his name, do you, chief?" he inquired, with great interest.

"Yes, I do, too," Hodgins replied. "One of my detectives managed to find out that much from one of the printers who works for the *Bulletin*. The fellow's name is Hawley, and he works for a New York newspaper."

"I thought as much," exclaimed young Gale, with a

frown. "I heard on Park Row the other day that Hawley, of the *Sentinel*, was taking a vacation up in the Catskills. Too bad you didn't catch him, chief, and send him to jail. I've no use for that fellow."

"I'll send him to jail, all right, if I ever manage to lay hands on him," declared the policeman, a glint in his eyes.

"But can you?" the elder Gale queried. "Could you send him to jail, I mean, for taking those snapshots, even if you were to catch him? After all, my dear chief, he has violated no law. I was looking up the penal code a little while ago, and I find there is no statute which covers his case. I am afraid you couldn't do anything to him—in a legal way."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Hodgins, with a discomfited look. "Well, that's certainly news to me, Mr. Gale. I thought for sure there was a law covering his offense. If there ain't one, there certainly ought to be."

"Say, that gives me an idea," cried the younger Gale excitedly. "What's the matter with getting the city council to pass an ordinance making it a misdemeanor punishable by six months' imprisonment for any person to take a photograph on any street or in any public building of Oldham without a special permit signed by the chief of police? You fellows ought to have enough pull with the council to get such a law put through immediately."

"An excellent plan!" declared the elder Gale. "Such an ordinance would not apply to past offenses, of course, but it would enable you, chief, to send this young scamp Hawley to prison if he ever comes back to Oldham and takes any more pictures."

"Yes," cried the younger Gale eagerly, "and you can rest assured that Hawley will come back to take more pictures. In fact, I've got a scheme to bring him back. Get that ordinance passed by the council, chief, and I'll guarantee that you'll have the satisfaction of seeing Mr. Hawley, of the *Sentinel*, behind bars. My little scheme is bound to work."

He explained his scheme to his father and Chief Hodgins, and both of them gave it their enthusiastic approval.

"It's a pippin!" declared the head of the Oldham police force joyously. "It's easy to see, Mr. Gale, that your son is a chip of the old block when it comes to cleverness.

"We'll put that ordinance through right away," he went on. "I guess there won't be any trouble in getting the council to pass it. And then, when the law's on the books, we'll set a little snare for that confounded Camera Chap. He's sure to walk right into it."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TELEGRAM.

After his exciting visit to Oldham, the Camera Chap resumed his rest cure at his friend's place in the mountains; but he kept in touch with Carroll by telephone, and these conversations made him yearn for another excursion into town.

One morning—to be precise, it was just three days after his trip to Oldham—Carroll called him up on the telephone and imparted to him an interesting piece of news.

"You ought to feel flattered, Hawley, old man," the proprietor of the *Bulletin* chuckled. "They've passed an ordinance solely on your account. Of course, they won't admit that you were the cause of it, but I am quite sure that the bill was put through expressly to prevent you from coming back and taking any more snapshots."

"What's the nature of the ordinance?" the Camera Chap inquired.

"It is known as the 'anticamera bill.' Makes it a misdemeanor to take a photograph on the streets of Oldham or in any of the public buildings without a special license from the chief of police."

"What's the penalty?" Hawley inquired, with great interest.

"A fine of a hundred dollars or six months in the penitentiary, or both," Carroll replied.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the Camera Chap. "Six months in jail for taking a picture! Why didn't they make it hanging while they were about it?"

"Perhaps they would if they had thought of it," returned Carroll. "But I say, old man, be sure to keep away from Oldham; or, if you should have to come to town for any reason, don't fail to leave your camera behind you. Chief Hodgins is just wasting away with yearning for a chance to get even with you; and you can rest assured that if they catch you violating the law, it won't be merely a hundred-dollar fine in your case—it will be a hundred-dollar fine and six months' imprisonment."

"That would be pleasant," said the Camera Chap, with a laugh. "Much obliged for tipping me off, old man. I shall certainly make it a point to be careful. Any more news?"

"Nothing worth mentioning. I told you the other day that your old friend Gale, of the *Daily News*, was in town, helping his old man run the *Chronicle*, didn't I?"

"Yes. What's he doing? Up to any of his old tricks?"

"I haven't been able to get wind of any, but I guess he's planning some mischief, all right," replied Carroll, with a laugh. "I met him on the street yesterday, and he was so effusive that my suspicions were at once aroused. He shook me by the hand as though he had always loved me like a brother; said he hoped that I'd let bygones be bygones and that we'd be good friends—that there was no reason why fellows should be enemies just because they were running rival papers. You know the smooth line of talk that faker can hand out."

The Camera Chap laughed. "Yes; and, as you say, he's generally planning some mischief when he lays it on as thick as that. Better keep a sharp lookout, Fred."

"You can bet I'm going to," Carroll assured him. "By the way, he spoke about you. Asked me whether I'd seen you lately. And he called you 'good old Hawley.'"

"Ye gods!" the Camera Chap exclaimed. "He must be planning my assassination at the very least."

After that telephone conversation Hawley sat for some time on the porch of his host's bungalow, and his gaze was concentrated wistfully on the steep mountain road which led straight to the town of Oldham.

"Six months in prison for a snapshot!" he mused. "What an adventure! That would, indeed, be a risk worth running! A fellow who could get away with a stunt of that sort would have done something really worth while. And Carroll said that they passed that ordinance especially for my benefit. It would almost be cowardly to refuse the challenge."

A messenger boy on a bicycle rode up to the house and interrupted his musings at this point.

"Say, mister, is there anybody here named Hawley?" the youngster inquired.

"There certainly is, son," the Camera Chap replied. "What have you got? A telegram, eh? Hand it over."

As he perused the contents of the yellow envelope, he muttered an exclamation of mingled joy and astonishment. The telegram was from Paxton, managing editor of the New York *Sentinel*, and was worded as follows:

"Will you run over to Oldham immediately on receipt of this and photograph city hall, exterior view? Rush print to office. Sorry interrupt vacation, but picture badly needed. PAXTON."

"Now, what in the name of all that's wonderful can he want with a picture of Oldham's city hall?" thought the Camera Chap. "It's certainly a mighty queer assignment. However, it makes no difference, of course, what they want it for. The fact that they do want it is good enough for me. This telegram has arrived just at the psychological moment. I was hunting for an excuse to go to Oldham, and here's a good one."

TO BE CONTINUED.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS FOR A FISH STORY?

Last spring, while a party of tourists were fishing up North, a well-known lawyer lost his gold watch from the boat in which he was sitting.

Last week he made another visit to the lakes, and during the first day's sport caught an eight-pound trout. His astonishment can be imagined when he found his watch lodged in the throat of the trout.

The watch was running and the time correct. It being a "stem-winder," the supposition is that in masticating his food the fish wound up the watch daily.

TREATMENT OF CHILDREN.

An absent-minded doctor was called in to see a child two years old suffering from convulsions. After a careful diagnosis, he prescribed as follows:

"Nervous excitement. Avoid all violent emotions; abstain from wines and spirits; avoid excess at table and other indulgences; travel a good deal; go frequently to the theater. Beware of reading a certain class of novels."

SMALLEST RACE OF PEOPLE.

The inhabitants of the Andaman Islands are the smallest race of people in the world taken as a whole. The average height of a full-grown Andaman is three feet, eleven inches, and the average weight less than seventy pounds. They are very warlike, and, as they throw poisoned spears with marvelous accuracy, it is not at all strange that travelers do not care to encounter them.

HER FATHER HAD NO OBJECTION.

"How does your father seem to regard my coming here?" anxiously asked Adolphus of little Bobby, while Maud was upstairs, getting ready to present herself.

"I guess he don't care nothin' about it," replied Bobby carelessly.

"So he has no objection, eh? But what did he say, my little man?"

"He said if Maud was a mind to make a fool of herself, why, let her."

THE RUSE WORKED.

"Bobby is attending to his pianoforte lessons very faithfully of late," said the youth's uncle.

"Yes," replied his mother. "I don't have any trouble with him about that now."

"How did you manage it?"

"Some of the neighbors complained of the noise his exercises made, and I told him about it. Now he thinks it's fun to practice."

A HORSE STORY.

"Mamma"—sorrel colt gazes anxiously to his dam—"the chestnut filly wants me to run away with her the next time we go driving together."

He looked down shyly.

"What shall I say?"

The mare bridled up.

"Turn to her, my son, and whisper gently: 'Neigh, neigh, Pauline!'"

And with a horse laugh they resumed the discussion of their table d'oat.

BOBBY'S BAD BOX.

Mrs. Suburb—"Bobby, I wish you would weed this flower bed."

Bobby—whimpering—"If I sit out here in the hot sun, a-pullin' weeds, I'll get all sunburned, and my skin will be so sore I can't sleep."

Mrs. Suburb—"That's easily remedied. After you get through with the flower beds you may pull al' the plantain weeds out oi the lawn and bring them to me. Plantain leaves are good for sunburn."

SHOWING HIS WISDOM.

Housekeeper—"I wish to get some borax."

New Boy—"Powdered?"

"I hardly know. I saw in a paper that roaches could be killed with borax."

"Guess you'd better take the other kind, ma'am. It's 'most as hard as rocks. Have you a little boy?"

"Y-e-s."

"Well, if I was you, I'd let him do the throwing."

BETTER THAN ALARM CLOCKS.

Bright Boy—"You don't have to wake up the girl any more do you?"

Mother—"No, for a wonder; she has awakened herself every morning for a week."

"I thought she would."

"Why so?"

"All the flies I caught in that fly trap I took upstairs and let out in her room."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Turtle Snaps on Girl's Toe.

Miss Mae Leser, of Gratz, Pa., an eighteen-year-old girl, knows how it feels to haul a large snapping turtle out of the water with her large toe. With some other girls, Miss Leser was September Morn-ing in the silent stream that gambols through the outskirts of Gratz. She gave a scream when the snapper seized her toe, and the girls who were with her say she went down into the water before they were able to get to the rescue.

When the turtle was hauled out on dry land, and had sized up the situation, he let loose and hastened back to the water. Miss Leser's toe is badly bruised.

Baby Takes Thrilling Ride.

After dashing down a steep hillside fifty yards in a go-cart, which overturned twice, and plunging from a six-foot retaining wall, George Bukalic, aged two, son of Rudolph Bukalic, a Hungarian, of 2003 East Street, Pittsburgh, Pa., still strapped in the gocart, landed in front of a trolley car in East Street. The car was stopped in time to avoid running over the cart, and the baby crawled out from under the wrecked cart unhurt, except for two slight bruises on the head.

With Three Original Members.

With three survivors, the Hazleton Liberty Band, of Hazleton, Pa., which was Grant's headquarters band the day Lee surrendered at Appomattox, paraded on its fiftieth anniversary of the return home from the Civil War.

Germans Interned at Norfolk Enjoy Life.

The crews of the German auxiliary cruisers *Eitel Friedrich* and the *Kronprinz Wilhelm*, interned at Norfolk, Va., are enjoying life to its fullest. Besides numerous entertainments accorded to officers and crews, the men are living a life of luxurious idleness. Their chief vocation at this time is pleasure—pleasure day and night.

They spend most of their time in Norfolk in the early hours of the day. In the afternoon they go to Virginia Beach, Ocean View, and other near-by resorts. They smoke good cigars, eat the best, and appear to have plenty of money. Barring a few cases of beri-beri on the *Kronprinz*, they are a healthy lot.

The men have been taken into the homes of a number of citizens and entertained, and special services have been held for them in Protestant churches. They are made to feel at home.

They appear on the streets in white uniforms with blue stripes and white hats. They are as neat as new pins and their conduct is perfect. They roam the streets arm in arm with American bluejackets, and visit the best theaters and other public resorts.

They are beginning to love the great American game. Several hundred of them attended a baseball game in Portsmouth and rose up and cheered a player who drove the ball over the fence for a home run. Whether they understand the game or just followed the Americans who stood up and cheered, no one but themselves knew. But there is a movement on foot to organize two baseball teams out of the crews—one on the *Eitel* and another on the *Kronprinz*—and some of the men are practicing daily. They have spent over two hundred dollars for equipment. A short member of the crew, whom the American sailors call "Buelow," drove a ball over the sea wall in a practice game.

Rescue Little Fishes for Food of Future.

A regular life-saving service for fish is the latest conservation kink. In Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois the State fish commission, with the cooperation of the United States government, operate fish-saving expeditions for the benefit of the land-locked fish left in small ponds along the course of the Mississippi River.

In the springtime the river rises and spreads out over the country, filling numerous small channels and hollows. In August the water begins to recede. The large fish note the warning and escape, but the little fish remain until the dried-up channel has cut off their means of escape. Ultimately these small ponds and channels dry up completely and billions of fish have been lost annually in this way.

The fish-saving service consists of parties of men who wade out into these inland ponds, take up the fish in nets, and restore them to the main body of the river. The fish rescued are about finger length, and from twenty to forty large tubs of them have been taken in a single day from a pond not more than half an acre in area. Billions of black bass, perch, sunfish, and other edible species are in this way added to the nation's food resources.

"Bedtick Banks" Are Failures.

"Bedtick banks" have proved a failure to some persons of Uniontown, Pa. Robbers continue to make successful raids on savings deposited in ticks. Fifteen hundred dollars was obtained from beneath a mattress in the home of John Morgan, at Lambert, and six hundred dollars was secured from a similar hiding place in the home of John Holly, at Continental.

Since the failure of the First National Bank, depositors have withdrawn their savings from solvent banks and concealed the sums about their homes. Nearly two hundred and fifty thousand dollars is said to have been drawn from banks in that section. Since it has become known that parties are acting as their own bankers, burglarious gents have evidently flocked to the region.

Shoots Two; Kills Himself.

Harvey O. Dysinger, aged forty, a rich Hardin County farmer, shot and fatally injured his wife, killed his daughter, Esther, aged fifteen, and wounded his son, Herbert, aged sixteen, and committed suicide at his home one mile north of Forest, Ohio. The only member of the family to escape unscathed was the youngest child, Kenneth, aged eleven, who was rescued by Herbert. The latter is not seriously hurt.

Herbert was awakened at four-thirty in the morning by several shots, and was just climbing out of bed to investigate when Dysinger entered his room and fired at him.

The bullet wounded him in the head. Dysinger was also armed with a hatchet.

Herbert, stunned and bleeding, grappled with his father, and the two wrestled about the room. Finally the boy disarmed the crazed man, and, grabbing the gun and hatchet, ran downstairs, where he pulled his younger brother, Kenneth, from bed.

While he was gone, Dysinger obtained a revolver, and, lying down on the bed beside his wife, shot himself through the heart. He is thought to have become insane.

Noted Mission Worker Dies.

Walter B. Moorcroft, of Paterson, N. J., for twenty years a prominent mission worker among drunkards and fallen women, died following a stroke of apoplexy.

Twenty years ago Moorcroft owned a resort known as "The Hole in the Wall" in New York. He dropped into the John Street Mission one night, and what he heard caused him to close the place at ten o'clock.

Railroad to Bar Liquor.

Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad officials have announced that every train on the entire system will be prohibited from selling liquors.

The Only Way.

"What a lively baby!" said Brannigan. "Have ye had his picture took yet?"

"Not yet," said his proud father. "I've tried to, but afther an hour's lost labor the photographer advised us to go to a movin'-picture studio!"

Crosses Ocean for "Story."

Eliezer Ben Jehuda, editor of the *Haor*, a newspaper published in Jerusalem, has arrived in New York from Patras. Ship-news reporters who welcomed him at the pier were beset by mingled emotions when they learned that the *Haor* has four editions a year and no extras.

The *Haor* means in English, *"The Light."* Mr. Jehuda has come to New York on a rush assignment, and he was gravely concerned lest he would not get his story in for the October edition.

It was learned there are no vacancies on the editorial, reportorial, or business staff of the *Haor*.

He Poisons Milk to Get One Dollar.

John Kelly, eleven years old, admitted in the Brooklyn children's court, Brooklyn, N. Y., that he had put a quantity of lye in a bottle of milk for the use of his eighty-one-year-old grandmother, with whom he lived. "I only wanted to make her sick so she would have to go to bed," he explained. "That would give me a chance to go through the house and get hold of some money. I needed a dollar awful bad."

The boy's parents died when he was an infant, and his grandmother reared him.

Cyclone Plays Odd Pranks.

A cyclone played queer pranks and did much damage in Dowagiac, Mich. A water tank at the stove works was blown from its sixty-foot pedestal and crashed through a near-by factory building. A barn south of the city was carried several feet away and upturned, leaving two horses standing in their stalls unhurt. A new cottage was demolished at Indian Lake. The roof and upper story of a farmhouse was blown off. Trees were uprooted and cottages damaged at several summer resorts.

Woman Finds Way to Lift Bucket in Well.

The problem of securing a water supply for household uses has been solved in a novel and up-to-date way by a homesteader woman living near Fairview, Mont. There is a well on the place. Like most wells in that section it is a deep one, being one hundred and seventy-five feet down. The family has no windmill nor even a pump, but draws its water in the old oaken bucket on a pulley way. In this case the bucket that hangs in the well is a ten-gallon keg.

When the husband is at home, he is able to operate the keg by hand, but his business keeps him in town most of the time, and the large share of the water hauling devolves upon the wife. She is unable to lift the keg. She has a twenty-horse-power automobile, however, and this serves the purpose. When in need of water, she lowers the keg, attaches the well rope to the roadster, throws in the clutch, and up comes her water supply while she stands idly by.

Burglars Steal Two Fleas.

They were curious burglars who broke into the home of Herbert Randall, an artist and curio collector of Hartford, Conn. Passing over a quantity of silver, they chose their loot from the curios.

Included in the booty they got were two very special fleas, and the only ones in the house. The fleas were dressed in red uniforms to represent soldiers. Mr. Randall bought them from an old lady in Seattle, who made a living dressing fleas in martial array. They reposed in little boxes against a background of white cotton, and were usually observed through a microscope. Mr. Randall has one of the largest and best curio collections in the State.

New Corn Picker Invented.

The farmers in the great corn belt of the United States are realizing more and more that the longest and hardest and most expensive job on the farm these days of modern machinery is husking corn by hand, and, with this idea in view, an Illinois inventor has lately perfected a corn picker, which will do away with the husking by hand.

This machine does not husk the corn clean, because that is not necessary, but simply puts it in the wagon the easiest and cheapest way possible, and thereby does away with the big, heavy, and costly corn husker.

This inventor's corn picker is said to resemble the corn binder in construction and is no heavier or more costly, and is expected to revolutionize the corn-picking industry, and will be greatly appreciated by cattle feeders who fatten their cattle on corn and by the corn farmers in general.

Kansas Alfalfa for Army.

A contract has been made by Major General Aleshire, of the quartermaster's department of the United States army with a commission company of Kansas City, Mo., for the purchase of three thousand tons of alfalfa to go to the army post at Empire, Panama Canal Zone. The alfalfa will be delivered at Colon between June 30, 1915, and August 1, 1916. The contract price is not quite twenty-five dollars a ton.

This deal will be good news to farmers, for it will go

far to show that alfalfa has gone to the head as prime hay for all purposes in all parts of the world. Our farmers can cut from four to six tons from every acre of ordinarily good farming land, and this without plowing, harrowing, furnishing seed, or paying out money for threshing or fertilizer.

Indian Gets Third Burial.

A strange burial attended by old residents of Wyandotte County took place at the Indian burial ground on the General Miller Farm in Delaware Township, near the Leavenworth County line, in Missouri. For the third time the body of Captain Ne Con He Con, a chief of the Delaware tribe of Indians, was laid to rest.

The Indian chief died in 1863 and was buried according to tribal customs in a grave containing many desirable relics, and a blanket, a silk sash, and gold braid were scattered over the ground.

In 1883 the grave was robbed by relic hunters and again the body of the chief was buried, and the decorations scattered on top the ground. The third burial was Wednesday. H. F. Heisler, of the Kansas side, Wyandotte County's oldest citizen, officiated. The burial was solemnized for the purpose of maintaining respect for the burial place of the Delawares.

Lightning Kills Two Boys.

Tom Patton, eighteen, and Clyde Ellis, seventeen, were struck and instantly killed by lightning near Norman, Okla. The boys were running to a shed to escape a storm.

Interesting New Inventions.

A new burglar alarm designed for outbuildings fires a blank cartridge when an intruder touches a wire, which can be laid in almost any desired direction.

To make a baby enjoy his bath, a cork doll that bobs around on the water while he splashes has been invented by a New Jersey woman.

To prevent an automobile spattering mud upon pedestrians, there has been invented a flexible metal ring to be attached close to a tire.

Among the space-saving household novelties is a folding washtub, which may be fastened against collapsing when filled with water.

In an electric gun invented in England, which seems to be successful, a projectile is hurled through a tube by the action of electric magnets on the outside.

For military purposes a United States army officer has designed an automobile that will carry fourteen men, with full equipment and three days' rations, eight hundred miles on one filling of its fuel tanks.

Electric-light signals, powerful enough to be seen in the daytime, are being adopted by several electric railroads in preference to semaphores, as they save the expense of motor-driven mechanism.

Proud of His Ambitious Hen.

John F. Williamson, of Dalton, Ga., has a hen he wouldn't swap even for any hen in the State of Georgia, for she has established a record of which any hen might be proud. Not satisfied with hatching fifteen thoroughbred Rhode Island Reds out of fifteen eggs, this fowl, who is a Plymouth Rock, decided to try the merits of her own particular breed, and laid eight eggs, while hatching her brood. Mr. Williamson does not state whether the Plymouth Rock eggs hatched or not, but says the mystical number "twenty-three" may have prevented the hen from carrying out her purpose.

Man Pays Uncle Sam Twenty Cents.

The secretary of war has received from Chicago a letter inclosing twenty cents in stamps, with the statement that the sum is inclosed "for bacon and eggs." Mr. Garrison could not recall the transaction, so he turned the letter over to the treasury department, where the twenty cents was added to the "conscience fund."

It is supposed that a retired soldier ate more than the law allowed, and that he now compensates the government for his meal.

The conscience fund, which in reality has a separate existence only on paper, has been growing since President Madison's administration, and the total now is nearly $500,000.

Old King of 'Gators is Dead.

The king alligator of Georgia has been killed at Hutchinson's pond at Adel by M. L. Crowley, after the beast had eluded hunters for twenty-two years. The alligator measured ten feet four inches and had thirty-seven notches on its tail, which shows that it was thirty-seven years old.

Many have been the attempts to kill the sly old creature, but always, until now, it has escaped the bullets aimed at it and has scuttled safely back to its cave. It was the 'gator's appetite for hogs that proved its undoing.

Mr. Crowley, who for twenty-two years has been hunting this beast, tied the leg of a porker to a tree near Hutchinson's pond, and hid himself. The wary old 'gator slid out of the water, through a clump of bushes, and was just reaching for the bait when Mr. Crowley fired. The bullet took the beast in a vital spot and killed it instantly.

Dies from Woodtick Bite.

Doctor M. S. McCrillis, a pioneer dentist, of Douglas, Wyo., is dead of spotted fever, caused by the bite of a woodtick. This is the seventh death from spotted fever, or woodtick fever, that has occurred in Wyoming this year.

Owing to the cold, wet spring woodticks are more numerous and especially more poisonous than for many years. Hundreds of persons throughout the State have been or are now ill from the effects of woodtick bites.

Robbers Hold Up Fifteen Hobos.

Two masked men, armed with a revolver and an electric flash light, held up and robbed fifteen hobos while they were sleeping in a box car in Wichita, Kan. The robbers got seventy cents and a plug of tobacco from the fifteen.

When the hobos were ordered to throw up their hands, one refused, and, for his obstinacy, was shot. He died in a hospital. He gave his name as Ben Rider, of Chicago. When the police arrived, the holdup men were searching other box cars in the railroad yards.

Nothing but Water in This Unique Township.

Hyde County, near Kinston, N. C., has the most unique township in the United States. It is "Lake Township," with barely a square inch of dry land in it and not a single resident.

The biggest drainage undertaking in the history of the

south Atlantic States will next winter reclaim the bottom of Mattamuskeet Lake, one of the two largest fresh-water bodies in the south Atlantic group. Gigantic pumps will drive the water from the lake at the rate of a million gallons a minute.

Mattamuskeet Lake is eighteen miles long and seven miles wide, but at its deepest point is not more than three and one-half feet in depth. The land of the entire county is of a peaty nature, and this basin was burned out by a fire before the coming of the white men. Now, even, such fires sometimes have to be checked by the people.

Dare County adjoining Hyde, has the largest area of salt water within its boundaries of any county in the United States; Hyde has the largest area of fresh water. The other large lake of the south Atlantic group is Alligator Lake, only a few miles from Mattamuskeet.

The sixteen pumps to be used in this reclamation work have one-hundred-and-eight-inch suctions and seventy-two-inch discharges.

To show the productiveness of this land to be recovered, never yet under the plow, a small plot adjacent to its shores is now sown in twenty-two hundred varieties of grain and vegetables, flowers, fruits, and nuts. Lake Township will be opened to settlement in 1916.

Munich Driven to Lemonade.

Munich, the greatest beer-drinking center of Germany, has been compelled sharply to curtail the consumption of beer. The amount of beer now available for public use is only one-third of the ordinary supply.

A number of the famous beer gardens are now closing at seven o'clock in the evening, owing to the shortage of beer. Some of these places are encouraging their guests to call for lemonade as a substitute for beer.

Billposters Bar Liquor Ads.

No advertisements of intoxicating liquors will be placed on the billboards of the Associated Billposters and Distributors of the United States and Canada after the close of this year, according to Donald Ross, president of the association.

Mr. Ross was a witness for the association, dissolution of which is being sought by the government on the ground that it is a trust in violation of the Sherman act. The Billposters and Distributors' Protective Company is the oldest and largest of the official licensed solicitors of the alleged trust.

"At the last meeting of the poster association," Mr. Ross said, "the board of directors voted to prohibit all advertisements of intoxicating liquors.

Ex-mayor, Once Rich, Begs Dime and Dies.

Frank A. McGowan, former mayor of Trenton, N. J., died in a hospital in Hoboken, to which he had been taken after begging a dime from a policeman. He was reputed to have had at one time a fortune of more than three million dollars. Cerebral hemorrhage was given as the cause of death.

Shows Curious Potato Vine.

A potato vine that is bearing potatos on the vine above ground as well as below it, is the latest thing in freak vines in Bethany, Mo. The queer vine has been exhibited by Johnson Hogan, of this place, who found it only recently in his potato patch. At each joint of the vine there is a well-formed potato, and there was also an unusually large number of potatos attached to the roots.

Metal from '62 Taken Out of Hand.

Doctor D. R. Peters, of Mount Sterling, Ill., has removed from one of the fingers on one hand of J. P. Amonett a small piece of metal that he had received in the battle of Shiloh in the Civil War in 1862. The metal has been troubling Amonett lately, and he decided to have it removed. He said it seemed several times larger than it was.

Sleeps One Year and Expires.

After sleeping almost continuously for one year, Henry Mankey, a trooper during the Civil War, died in Columbus, Ohio. Physicians say the case is without parallel in medical annals. Mankey was seventy-four years old. The long sleep was held to be due to an injury.

Champion Woman Swimmer.

Miss Constance Meyer, champion woman swimmer of Portland, Ore., and one of the best on the Pacific coast, knew nothing about swimming three years ago. One day she attempted to cross a stream on horseback. The horse was unable to carry her across and she slipped into the water and held to his tail. Fortunately, he got to the shore with her, but Miss Meyer made up her mind that she must learn to swim. She began at the Portland Y. W. C. A., and soon became so proficient that she entered outdoor contests. When the national championship contests at the San Francisco Exposition were announced recently, Miss Meyer was sent from Portland.

"Learn to swim," is her advice to every girl. "It is good for your health and may get you out of danger some time."

Toadstools Kill Two.

Carlo Muzzareller and Dominic Mulano are dead, and ten other persons are seriously ill in West Franklin, Ill., as the result of including toadstools in a picnic luncheon. Little hope is held out for the recovery of the sick.

Many Ill from Rabbit Meat.

As a result of eating rabbits that had eaten loco weed, several score persons in Kenna, N. M., and the surrounding farming community were severely ill. Physicians were at a loss to account for the epidemic till they learned that every person who was ill had recently eaten rabbit meat. Rabbits and loco weed are extraordinarily plentiful this year, and hunters say that thousands of rabbits are locoed.

Fifty Thousand Dollars for Each Foot Lost.

Miss Daisy B. James, who had been a dancer at the Winter Garden in New York, values each of her lost feet at fifty thousand dollars.

She filed an action in the New Jersey Supreme Court, in Newark, N. J., for one hundred thousand dollars against the Lackawanna Railroad. Miss James was in such haste to board a train in East Orange on June 10th last that

she ran under the closed gates. As the train drew into the station, the air suction caught her wide taffeta skirts and sucked her under the cars. Both legs were cut off.

Trapping Arizona Monkeys.

Trapping monkeys is the latest industry to spring into prominence in Arizona. Several citizens of Parker, Ariz., have formed the Colorado River Monkey Company, with the intention of trapping and marketing a colony of several hundred monkeys known to exist in Cunningham Pass, an almost inaccessible cañon located northeast of this place.

There was a big gold excitement at the Pass in 1882. Among those who rushed in was an Italian organ grinder with a pair of monkeys. The monkeys escaped and have been multiplying ever since, in spite of the depredations of coyotes and other predatory animals.

Never Again for Johnny.

Johnny Williams, ten-year-old son of John N. Williams, of Big Laurel, Va., declares that he will never swing on another grapevine until he has carefully examined both ends.

A few days ago Johnny was out in the woods with some other boys and they found a grapevine, which, by cutting it off near the ground, would make a swing that they could take hold of and swing far out over a deep ravine.

Johnny was the most fearless in the bunch, so he grabbed onto the vine as soon as it was cut loose and swung out over the hollow. The other end of the vine had not taken hold of the limbs of the tree sufficiently to hold his weight, and he fell, taking the vine with him. He would have been dashed to death against the rocks below if he had not landed in the top of a beech tree. He caught onto a limb and held there until he could get a better balance, but the worst part was still to come, for the beech was a very tall one and there was no limbs for sixty feet above the ground. So there the boy had to sit for five long hours until men came with ladders and brought him down.

Pigeons Break World's Record.

Claim of a new world's record for flight by homing pigeons was made by the Fort Worth Pigeon Fanciers' Association. Four birds liberated at New Orleans, covered the 579 miles to Forth Worth in fourteen hours, maintaining an average of forty-one miles an hour.

Large Mound on Man's Head.

Contractor Charles S. Wilcox's thick "two-story" fedora saved him from instant death when a carpenter on the fifth floor of a new building, in Lansing, Mich., dropped a hammer on his head. Wilcox was on the first floor. The blow made him imitate a merry-go-round, but he finally got control and kept his balance. At present he is wearing a big mound beneath his life-saving hat.

Can't Catch Weasel Asleep.

U. S. Liphart, a farmer near Windsor, Pa., will receive bounty for trapping a weasel in his trousers. He has forwarded the head of the animal to the commissioner's office, together with an affidavit made before Justice D. A. Heindel.

Liphart was plowing when he noticed the weasel chasing a chipmunk. He went to the rescue, and the weasel turned on him and made a dart for his pantaloon leg, ascending rapidly. When it got as far as the knee, Liphart seized it and choked the life out of it.

Breaks Dentistry Records.

Mrs. James Seever, of Atchison, Kan., had twenty-five of her teeth pulled by a dentist, and did not take an anæsthetic. She did not become nervous or hysterical during the ordeal, and went home unassisted.

Vest Will Urge Big Navy.

The Navy League will send over the country to lecture in behalf of a greater navy Alexander S. Vest, son of former Senator George Graham Vest, Missouri, the last surviving member of the Congress of the Confederate States of America and an intimate friend of Jefferson Davis.

Feeding the Two-headed Calf.

Fed through rubber tubing, the two-headed calf at the country home of Tom van Swearington, in Shenandoah, Iowa, has been kept alive since its birth, a fortnight ago, and has strength enough to almost stand alone now. The freak of nature has attracted a great deal of attention.

Animal Horns and Antlers.

A record of the conditions of the deer, moose, and elk in the zoölogical park of New York City proves that their formidable-looking horns and antlers, which are newly acquired each year, are grown within four months. The old horns are dropped in the spring. The largest elk in the zoo lost both his antlers last year nine hours apart, on March 21st. By June 21st, the full-length antler had grown, although it was still soft or "in the velvet."

The dropping of the horn leaves a small circle of skull exposed. Within a week this is covered with brown skin. Then a round knob appears, resembling a tomato except in color. It soon begins to lengthen out into the horns which are to come, the growth sometimes amounting to nearly an inch in a day. When soft and growing, the horns are full of blood. After they have reached their full length, they begin to harden. By October the velvet has been worn off by rubbing against tree trunks and the horns are hard and smooth.

Tragic Dream Comes True.

Fulfilled premonitions constitute no small part of the lore of the mountains of southwest Virginia. The following story which was added to this lore recently was related by an old lady, Mrs. Richard Mullins, of Haddonfield, Va., whose word is to be relied upon.

Two men by the name of Fleming, who were cutting timber for a lumber concern, were boarding at Mrs. Mullin's. Finally their work was almost completed and the two men, whose first names were Clinton and Walter, saw that they could finish the work in another day.

The following night Mrs. Mullins dreamed that she saw a tree fall on Walter, crushing him to a shapeless mass. She related the dream next morning, but the men apparently gave it no consideration and walked to their work with light hearts. They were working near the house, and about one o'clock that afternoon Mrs. Mul-

lins was startled by the screams from Clinton, and she hurried to the place. There she found that a tree had fallen on Walter and killed him instantly.

Shot Through Brain, Lives.

With a bullet through his brain, physicians say Clay Brewster, aged fourteen, of Hoisington, Kan., will live. Young Brewster was accidentally shot in the left eye, three weeks ago, the shot passing through the cerebrum of the brain and coming out at the top of the head. The bullet was removed. He has regained consciousness and makes his wants known by signs, being unable to talk.

Kills Rat with Blow of Fist.

Thomas Dean, a Sunbury, Pa., man, was awakened from sleep by a pain in his right hand. He found three of his fingers bleeding. Turning his head on the pillow, he discovered a huge rat sitting on the pillow, and, Dean said, "apparently grinning in fiendish delight at what he had done to the hand."

With a crushing blow from his fist he struck the rat and sent it against the side of the room. The rodent fell dead. Dean weighed it and found its weight to be three pounds.

As proof of the occurrence, Dean showed the rat's body, unmarked, to his friends. Doctors cauterized the wounds.

Three-ring Movies Latest Idea.

"Three-ring movies" are the latest. Three film plays are shown at one time on three screens. This is at the Grand Central Palace in New York.

If you don't care for the comedy on the screen to the left, you can look at the romantic play in the center screen, or at the thriller on the screen to the right.

The chief advantage is that when you go in to see your favorite hero of the movies, who is billed on the posters outside, or go in to see a certain comedy, you aren't compelled to sit waiting through a program of pictures you don't care about particularly. It is an arrangement for busy folk who drop into a movie theater at the noon hour.

Wed Editor to Muzzle Her.

Miss Sadie Velle Fenton, of Denver, Col., Vassar graduate and the youngest woman editor in the United States, says that she has had to refuse numerous matrimonial offers from men who proposed mainly for the reason that they desired to control the editorial policy of her paper, the Logansport *Times*, published in the Indiana town of that name, and having the reputation of being the oldest local prohibition paper in America.

"I've had lots of proposals since I've been editing the paper," said Miss Fenton, "but they have been from men who wanted to marry me because they would like to edit the paper. Several of these were from men who did not believe in my views on prohibition and suffrage, and evidently thought the quickest way to correct them would be to marry me."

Two-story House Disappears.

Without warning, a two-story house, occupied by Andrew Lappi and his family on the site of the Colby mine, near Bessemer, Mich., suddenly sank into the earth and dropped the depth of the shaft. The family was away at the time, and, on returning, failed to find their house. A large stretch of country has been undermined in this vicinity, and several families are moving to other localities.

Costs Extra Cent for Show.

As soon as proper arrangements are made by the board of control of Montreal, Canada, for collecting the tax, every patron of a place of amusement will be obliged to add one cent to the cost of his theater ticket. The city council gave third reading of the necessary by-law, based on the authority secured at the last session of the legislature.

"The words 'place of amusement' shall mean and include theater, a moving-picture hall, an amusement hall, concert hall, circus, playground, race course, skating rink, and any other place in the city where any exhibition or entertainment whatsoever is given and an entrance fee collected," explains the ordinance.

The tax is imposed on each person admitted into any place of amusement, even if such person is admitted with a complimentary card or ticket.

How Much Silver is Wasted.

A greater amount of pure silver is used each year in this country in photography and photo-engraving than for any other purpose except the coinage of the United States. By the methods in general use only about ten per cent of the silver consumed in these industries is actually utilized. The remainder is simply wasted in the solutions which are thrown daily into the sinks to go out through the drain pipes.

Several schemes for conserving this waste are now being considered. One consists in saving the solutions in jars and barrels to be refined or evaporated to regain the silver. Another method, which is really quite practical, is to utilize the silver wasted in the fixing bath for silver plating.

The process is so simple that it can readily be carried on even by an amateur. The liquid is strained or filtered and placed in a hard-rubber box. An ordinary galvanic cell is attached by copper wires to a copper plate in one end of the receptacle. The articles to be plated should be well cleaned and placed in the solution opposite the copper plate. The silver will begin to deposit immediately. Fifteen or twenty minutes will suffice for a thorough plating. In most photographic establishments enough silver solution is thrown away each day to plate a couple of dozen spoons or forks.

Dog with Only Two Legs Left.

Carmargo, in Dewey County, Okla., has dogs—big dogs, little dogs, and, in fact, all kinds of dogs, but one in particular is somewhat of an oddity. This is a dog that travels on two legs.

Several months ago a dog belonging to Mr. Storey, section foreman, was run over by a train and two of his legs cut off. For some time he was unable to move around, but now has recovered so that he can navigate quite handily. The two legs on which he is forced to walk are both on one side. He not only walks, but can also run, and seems to be about as well able to get around as a dog with four good legs.

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784—A Prisoner of the Tomb.
785—A Resourceful Foe.
789—The Great Hotel Tragedies.
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